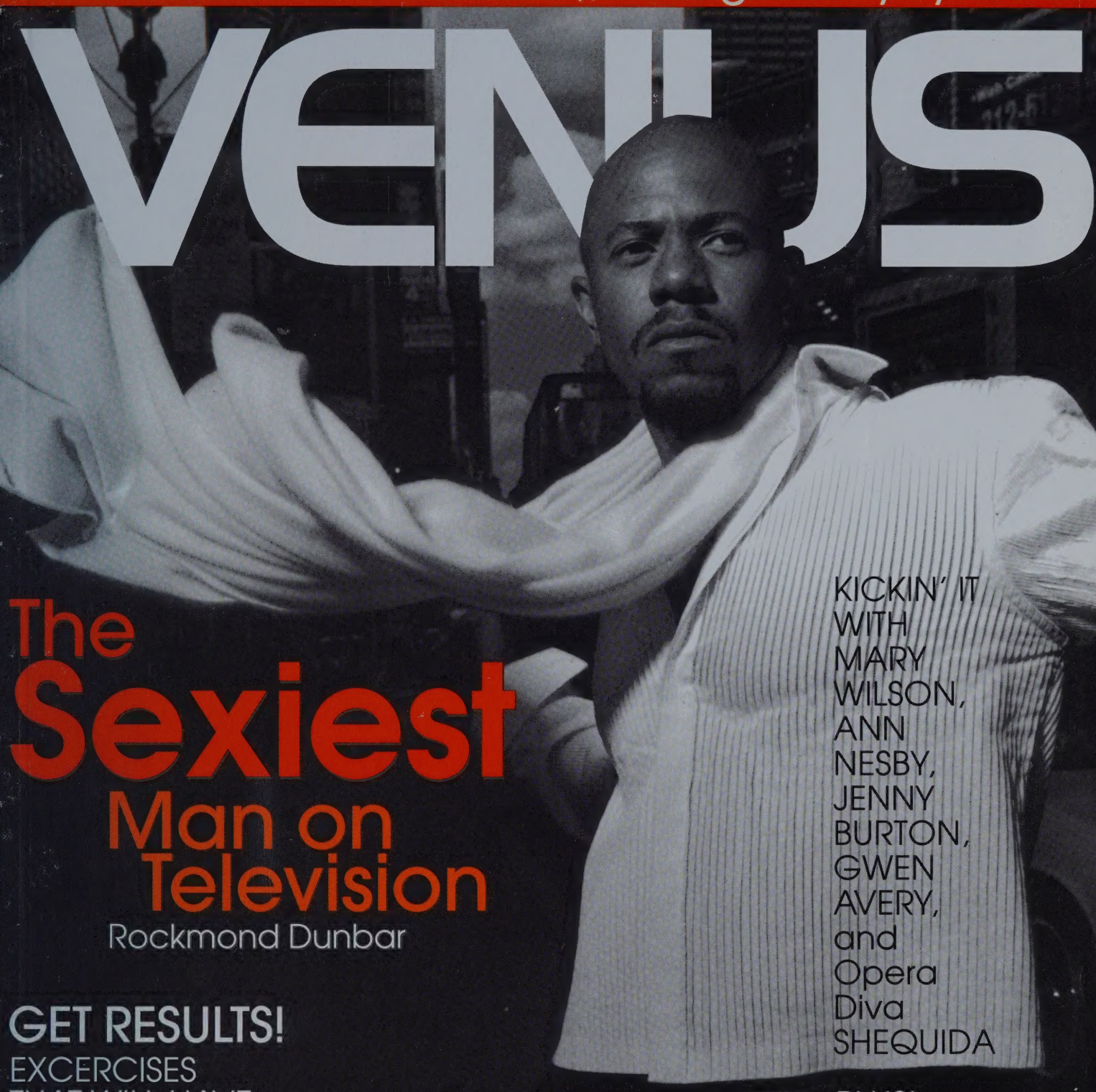
MIGHTY REAL! Before RuPaul, The Legendary Sylvester

VENUS



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Rockmond Dunbar

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9 WAYS TO GET CLOSER TO THE KIND OF LOVING YOU REALLY WANT

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Vol 8 No 1 March 2002

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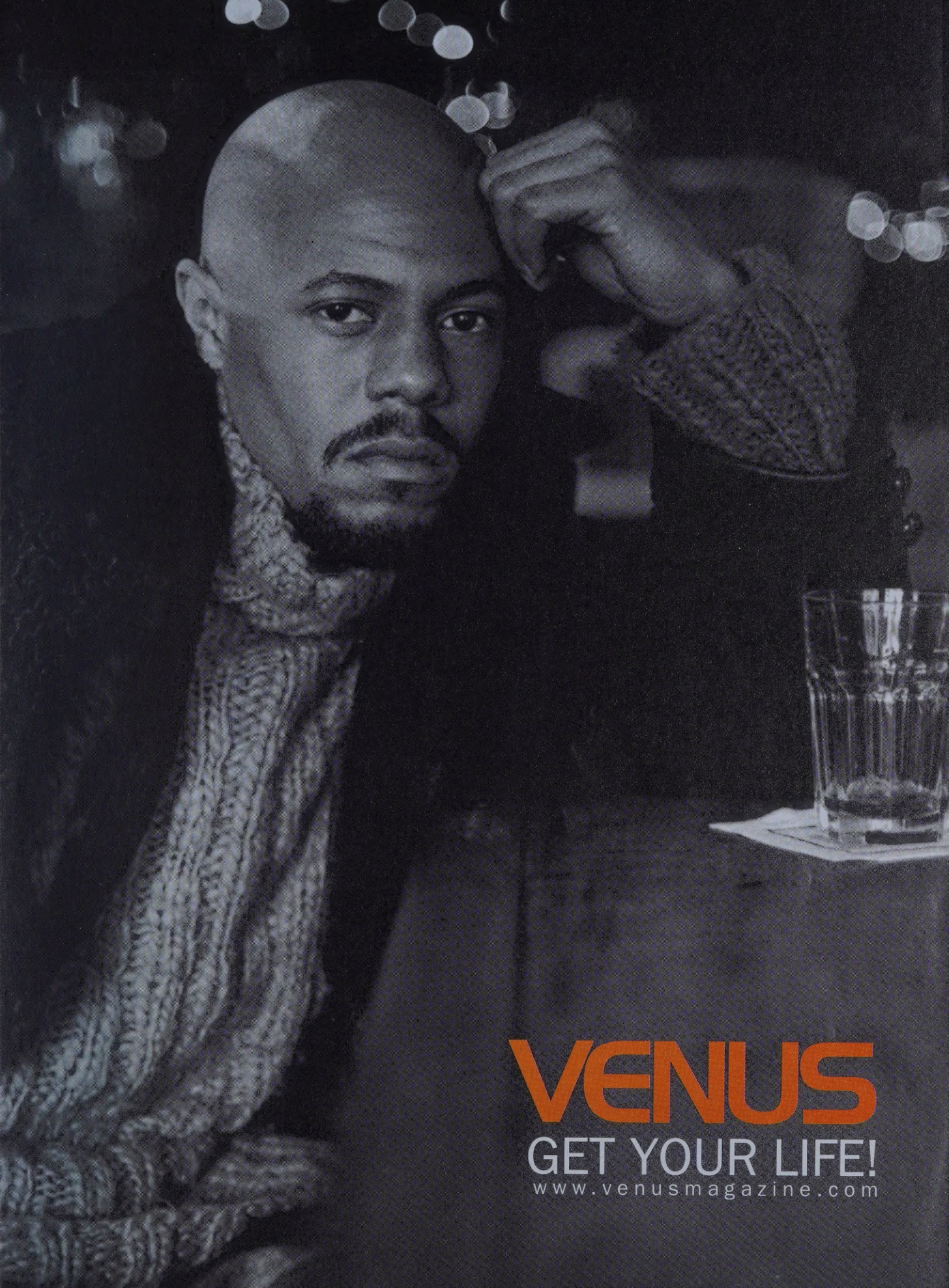
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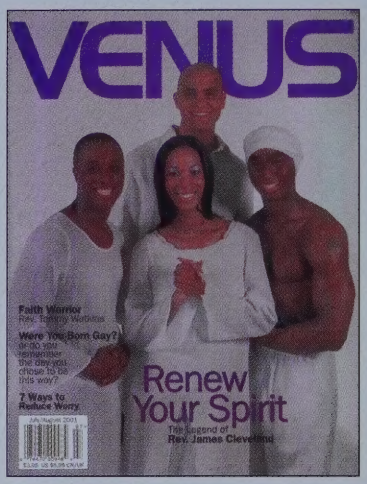

"Rev. Rodney Powell is setting himself up for failure by allowing himself to be used as a puppet by a white gay organization. The white gay rights movement will never compare to the Civil Rights Movement and the 400 years of servitude."

Lessons Learned

It was breathtaking and refreshing to read my very first copy of *Venus* magazine, [Vol. 7 No. 4, 2001.] Finally, black gays and lesbians have a national voice, and I enjoyed the eclectic range of articles concerning black gay life and the larger society.

I must respond to Mrs. Gwen Watkins, mother of the now deposed and defrocked Rev. Tommie Watkins, Jr. Mrs. Watkins should rid herself of such bondage and hegemony. God is Love; he alone can judge, and he doesn't make junk - Man does! I inferred from the article that Mrs. Watkins only loves her son on condition that he keep his sexuality a secret from members of First Missionary Baptist Church.

In no place in her letter did she state that she gives him her blessings for his mental, emotional, physical and spiritual contentment. It is the phony, wannabee saints, such as Mrs. Watkins, who perpetuate the black homophobia and intraracial discrimination in the black church. If on next Sunday at any church in any city all black gays, lesbians and bisexuals decided not to attend services, the majority of the pews would be empty.

Secondly, in "SoulForce: Seeking Justice for All God's Children," the Rev. Rodney Powell is setting himself up for failure by allowing himself to be used as a puppet by a white gay organization. The white gay rights movement will never compare to the Civil Rights Movement or the 400 years of servitude that blacks have endured in this country.

[Whites] have always had freedom when basic human rights were denied to the African Americans. I have never read anywhere, historically, where white gays were lynched, denied voting rights, denied access to public facilities, etc. White gays have always sat at the front of the bus, followed by white women, as people of color stood at the very back of the bus or we stood on a curb and watched from the outside.

The lessons learned from the Civil Rights Movement are inconsequential to a group that has always been and still is a member of the large white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) community. This group did not support the Civil Rights Movement in its heyday; they stood by quietly and watched, and sometimes supported, the denial of human rights to people of color in America. Rev. Powell can be of better use to the black gay and lesbian national unity.

Finally, amen to Rev. Irene Monroe's "Facing Our Moral and Spiritual Challenge." I agree that the infighting within the LGBT communities of color must stop; however, it will be a very virulent and uphill battle for unity. Many in the gay and lesbian community do not love themselves. They have been taught to feel this way by the media, parents, friends, co-workers, etc. This indescribable and wicked mental sickness crosses all economic and cultural backgrounds of gays of color. It will take several decades of group therapy to rid the black gay and straight community of such self-depreciating nonsense.

Sir Duke Hill
Killeen-Fort Hood, Texas

FOR HIV

SAFETY INFORMATION

- COMBIVIR does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others
- COMBIVIR should be used with other HIV medicines
- Make sure to see your doctor regularly because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells
- A buildup of lactic acid in the blood and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen
- Low risk of problems with the pancreas in adults and adolescents
- The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose

Please see Important Information for COMBIVIR on adjacent page.

COMBIVIR contains two medicines proven to help people with HIV live longer, healthier lives

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Patient Information about COMBIVIR Tablets

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: lamivudine/zidovudine tablets

Please read this information before you start taking COMBIVIR. Staying informed will help you to work more closely with your doctor and healthcare team to determine what is best for you. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussion with your doctor. You should remain under a doctor's care when using COMBIVIR and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is COMBIVIR?

COMBIVIR is the brand name of a tablet that combines EPIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine tablets) [3TC®] and RETROVIR® (zidovudine) Tablets [ZDV], two drugs which are used to treat HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

How does COMBIVIR work?

COMBIVIR is a combination of lamivudine (la-MIV-u-deen) and zidovudine (Zi-DOHV-u-deen), two medicines (nucleoside analogues) that slow down the replication of the HIV virus. This can reduce the virus' ability to infect new cells. It may help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Lamivudine plus zidovudine when used together can have stronger (synergistic) effects against the virus. COMBIVIR is a convenient way of taking lamivudine and zidovudine. COMBIVIR should usually be taken with other anti-HIV therapy.

Will COMBIVIR work the same as EPIVIR and RETROVIR taken together?

Taking one COMBIVIR Tablet twice a day is the same as taking one EPIVIR 150 mg Tablet twice a day and either two RETROVIR 100 mg Capsules three times a day or one RETROVIR 300 mg Tablet twice a day.

How should I take COMBIVIR?

Take COMBIVIR as your doctor prescribes it. The recommended dose is one COMBIVIR Tablet orally two times a day, with or without food. To help make sure you will benefit from COMBIVIR, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays."

What should I do if I miss a dose of COMBIVIR?

If you miss a dose by more than 4 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 4 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of COMBIVIR at any one time.

Does COMBIVIR cure HIV infection or AIDS?

No, there is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking COMBIVIR may still develop infections or other illnesses associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important to remain under the care of a healthcare provider. Use of lamivudine plus zidovudine has been shown to help patients with HIV infection stay healthy and live longer.

Does COMBIVIR reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

No, COMBIVIR, as well as other HIV medications, has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take COMBIVIR?

You should not take COMBIVIR if you have had a serious allergic reaction to either lamivudine (also known as EPIVIR or 3TC) or zidovudine (also known as RETROVIR or ZDV).

Do not take COMBIVIR at the same time as EPIVIR or RETROVIR, or TRIZIVIR® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), because they also contain lamivudine and zidovudine.

Individual dosing with EPIVIR plus RETROVIR, rather than COMBIVIR, should be considered for:

- A child under 12 years of age.
- Anyone who requires dosage adjustments due to drug side effects or poor kidney function.

If you are 65 years of age or over, consult your healthcare professional about the functioning of your liver, kidneys, and heart; about other illnesses you may suffer from, and about any other medications you may be taking. It is possible that the dosage may need to be modified.

What medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my healthcare provider?

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking COMBIVIR. Ask your doctor about enrolling you in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: 1-800-258-4263.
- You are breast-feeding. Mothers infected with HIV should not breast-feed their infants because HIV is present in breast milk.

Also talk to your doctor about:

- Problems with your blood counts.
- Problems with your muscles.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease, such as hepatitis.

Can COMBIVIR be taken with other medications?

Yes. COMBIVIR can be taken with most other medications, including most anti-HIV drugs. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medications, over-the-counter or prescription, that you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of COMBIVIR?

Do not rely on this summary alone for information about side effects. Your healthcare provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects that may be relevant to you.

The safety of COMBIVIR is not expected to be different from the safety of EPIVIR and RETROVIR given separately.

In clinical studies of lamivudine plus zidovudine, side effects occurring in 5% or more of patients included: muscle and joint pain, headache, nausea, weakness and fatigue, nasal symptoms, cough, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, neuropathy, trouble sleeping, fever or chills, loss of appetite, dizziness, abdominal pain or cramps, depression, skin rashes, and indigestion.

It's important to know that serious side effects can occur with COMBIVIR, such as a decrease in red and white blood cells and muscle damage. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including nucleoside analogues.

For HIV-infected individuals, periodic blood tests are recommended. If certain changes occur in your laboratory results while you are taking COMBIVIR, particularly if you become anemic or if your white blood cell count falls too low, your medication may need to be adjusted; your doctor may prescribe EPIVIR plus RETROVIR separately in place of COMBIVIR.

Tell your doctor promptly about any side effects or other unusual symptoms you may experience. Although it may make you healthier, COMBIVIR does not cure HIV.

Safety Information

Make sure to see your doctor regularly, because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells. A buildup of acid in the blood, and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen. The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose.

Other Information

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep COMBIVIR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Like most prescription drugs, lamivudine and zidovudine were required to be tested on animals before they were allowed for human use. In animal studies with doses much higher than those used in humans, zidovudine was associated with vaginal tumors. Your healthcare provider can tell you more about how drugs are tested on animals and what the results of these tests may mean about safety for you.

How should I store COMBIVIR tablets?

COMBIVIR Tablets may be stored at room temperature and do not require refrigeration.

gsk GlaxoSmithKline
GlaxoSmithKline
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

This provides a summary of information about COMBIVIR. If you have any questions or concerns about COMBIVIR or HIV, talk to your healthcare provider.

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CBV501R0 December 2001

"Her presence at several conferences . . . clearly reminded me that community-mindedness has no age requirement and that each of us has as much ability as the next person."

Why Not?

I was sad to learn of Ruth Joyce Waters' passing last summer [Vol. 7 No. 5, 2001, "Legendary"]. I remember her as a founder of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum (NBLGLF), a pioneering organization she held near and dear to her heart that greatly inspired me after attending my first conference in Oakland, February 1992.

I recall her presence at several conferences since: clearly the "Mother" of the organization and a reminder that community-mindedness has no age requirement and that each of us has as much ability as the next person to create change in our own communities.

My last memory of Waters was in the late '90s when I was interviewing for the position of executive director for the NBLGLF. Although one of three finalists, I was not selected. Afterward, as we often did during the conference, I was in the lobby with friends conversing, philosophizing and, in my case, being disappointed at not being selected for the position of E.D.

Waters joined us in the lobby. She was jovial and positive and someone pulled out a camera and wanted to take pictures. I didn't want to be photographed (a rarity for me!) because I was sad. When I declined to be photographed, she asked, "Why not?" I, of course, had no good reason and proceeded to be photographed. I'm glad she asked "Why not?" and I'm glad I had the honor of knowing and admiring Ruth Joyce Waters. It's time for me to look through my old photographs.

Crystal H. Weston
Oakland, CA

Great Warrior

Just wanted to let Leroy Whitfield know that I really enjoyed the article titled "Oh Drama!" [Vol. 7 No. 6]. The write-up about Sanford Gaylord was wonderfully done. Gaylord is a great warrior in the black gay community. I hope to see more of him in upcoming issues. The magazine staff is doing a great job!

Anthony Hardaway
Brothers United of Memphis, TN

Beautiful Portrait

Thank you so much for putting together such a great magazine. Finally, a publication that speaks to me and confronts the issues that matter to me and tells my story. I think it is very important for any group of people to look into the mirror of society and see themselves reflected, along with everyone else. Thanks, *Venus*, for showing such a beautiful portrait of me.

James Lane
Newark, NJ

Keep it coming!

write us and share your thoughts

Send letters with your name, address, and daytime phone number to: Letters, c/o Venus Magazine, P. O. Box 150, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706, or e-mail us at letters@venusmagazine.com. Letters chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity. All letters submitted become the property of Venus Magazine and may be used in any media.

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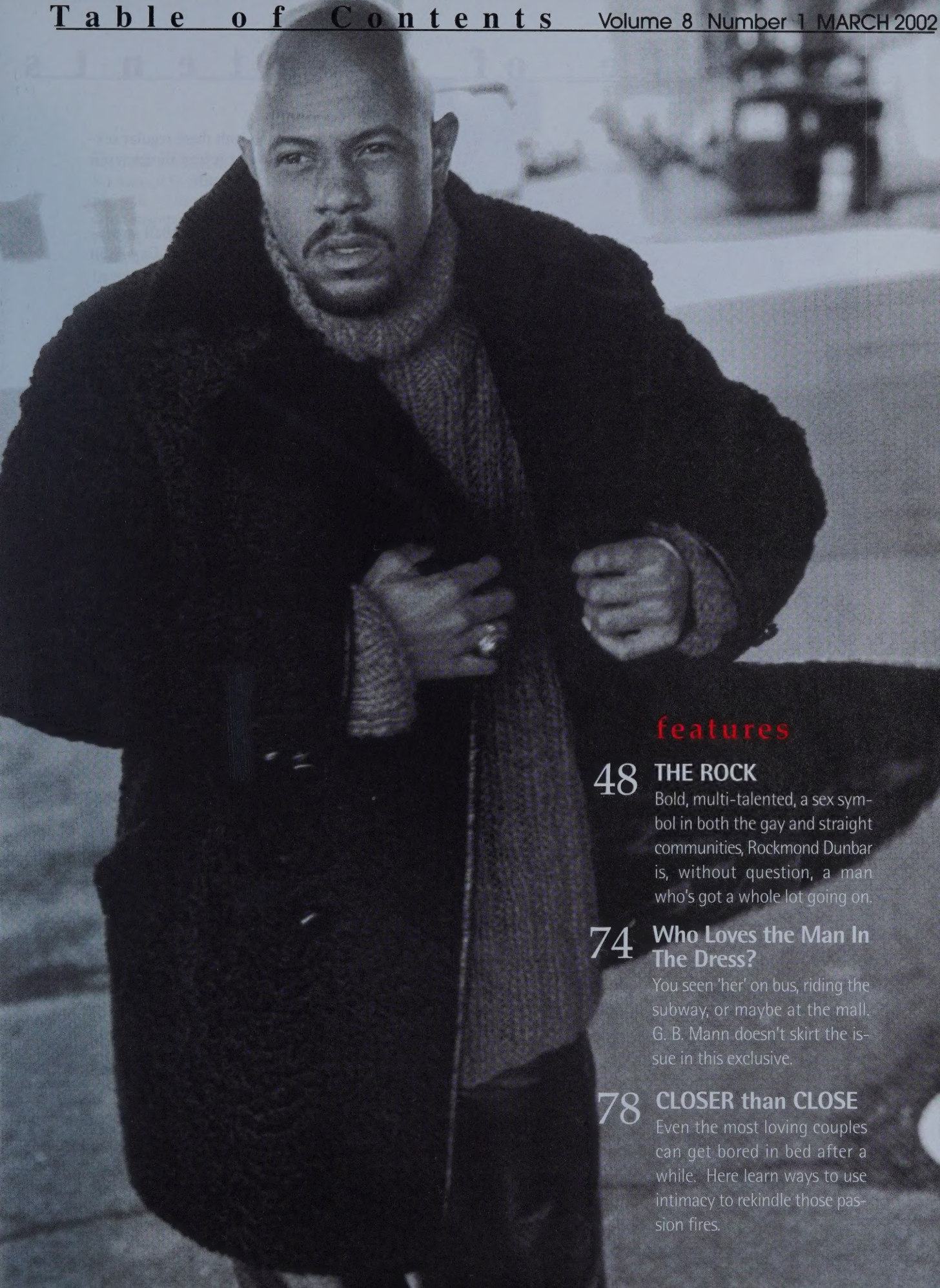

features

48 **THE ROCK**
Bold, multi-talented, a sex symbol in both the gay and straight communities, Rockmond Dunbar is, without question, a man who's got a whole lot going on.

74 **Who Loves the Man In The Dress?**
You seen 'her' on bus, riding the subway, or maybe at the mall. G. B. Mann doesn't skirt the issue in this exclusive.

78 **CLOSER than CLOSE**
Even the most loving couples can get bored in bed after a while. Here learn ways to use intimacy to rekindle those passion fires.

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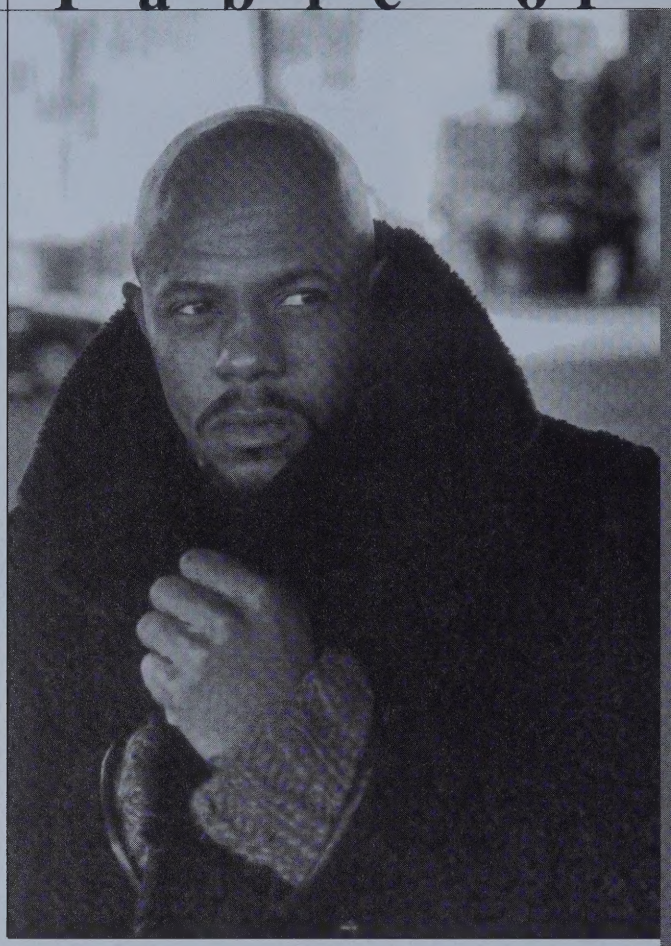

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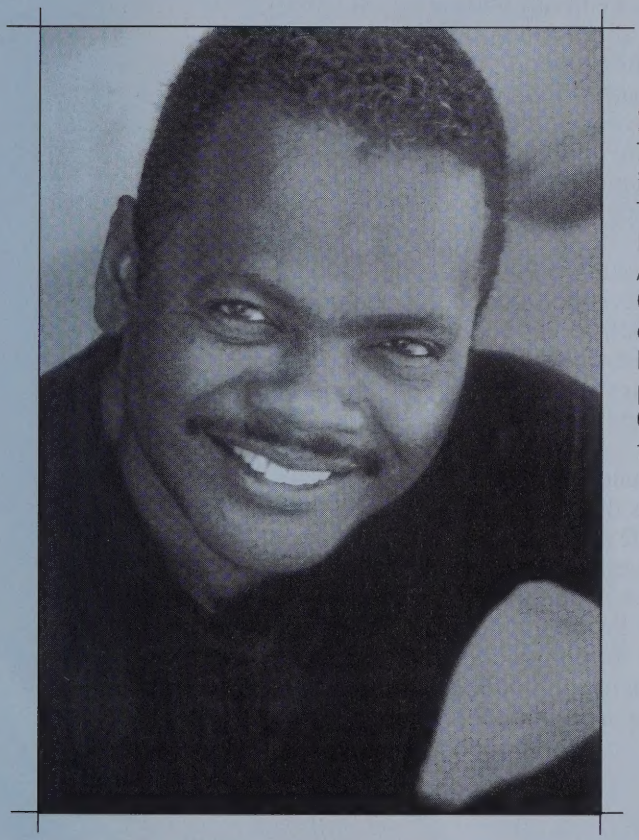
76 Piece of Mind
Could the rate of new HIV infections in our community be reduce if gay men would reduce the rate of anal sex?

80 Final Destination
Belize was visited by 98 million travelers in the past 5 years. What is all the hype? Majestic mountains, cavernous caves, barrier reefs to name a few!

90 Legendary
The original disco diva, SYLVESTER, took his style to mainstream America. His versatile 14 albums include crucial contributions to the disco songbook.

Donia Elizabeth Allen sat down with *Soul Food*'s Rockmond Dunbar. She shares her interview "The Rock" on page 48. "I found him easy to talk to and very open about what inspired him to play a role opposite gay brothers in *PUNKS*." Donia has written for Volume.com, Bet.com and currently has a monthly column in *Honey* magazine. In addition, she has published poems in *Sojourner: The Women's Forum* and in *The Madison Review*. Her first piece of literary criticism, "The Role of the Blues in Gayl Jones's Fiction" will appear in the Winter 2002 issue of *Callaloo: A Journal of African American and African Arts and Letters*. She lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.



Stanley Bennet Clay received 3 NAACP Theatre Awards and 3 Drama-Logue Awards for writing, producing and directing the stage play RITUAL. The recipient of the International Writers & Artists Edna Crutchfield Founder's Literary Achievement Award and Genre Magazine's Role Model to the Gay Community Award, Clay is the author of two novels, DIVA and IN SEARCH OF PRETTY YOUNG BLACK MEN. For 10 years the Los Angeles, California resident published and edited SBC magazine. On page 18, Clay interviews Mary Wilson as she prepares to tour the US in Duke Ellington's *Sophisticated Ladies*.

Holding It Down

have a great story idea?

This is a call for entries. Journalist, if you have fresh ideas to share with Venus readers and samples of your published work, we want to hear frm you! Venus Magazine, Attn: Malcolm Venerable, P. O. Box 150 Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706, or call 800/642-7535 or e-mail editor@venusmagazine.com.

Correction

In Volume 7 Number 6, December/ January 2002, 'DEVOTION, 4 Gay Women Share Their Passions and Their Pets' the images of the cat owners, Toni Thomas & Boxer and Leslie Pilgrim & Mister were transposed. We regret the error.

Nikki Hopewell, contributing editor, [not pictured] is a freelance copy editor and writer based in Chicago. "I'm a huge fan of Venus magazine, and I'm delighted to be working to help make it even better." Its no secret that Venus has long needed a tough copy chief. Nikki's job is to make sure our copy reads tightly and consistantly.

Geana Jones

people are still having sex

Welcome to our first issue ever Sex issue!

Discussing sexuality in a public forum has always been a challenge for Black folks. On one hand, we like to pretend its not happening at all. ["I don't put my business in the street!"] But just beyond this veil of privacy there's a whole lot of bed rocking going on! We admit that this is a departure from our normally sedate editorial but after eight years of carefully avoiding the subject, we feel its time. After all, even in the face of AIDS, PEOPLE ARE STILL HAVING SEX! In fact, according to the Venus Online Sex Survey, folks in our community aren't just having sex, they are intensely enjoying it! Check out the survey results on page 78.

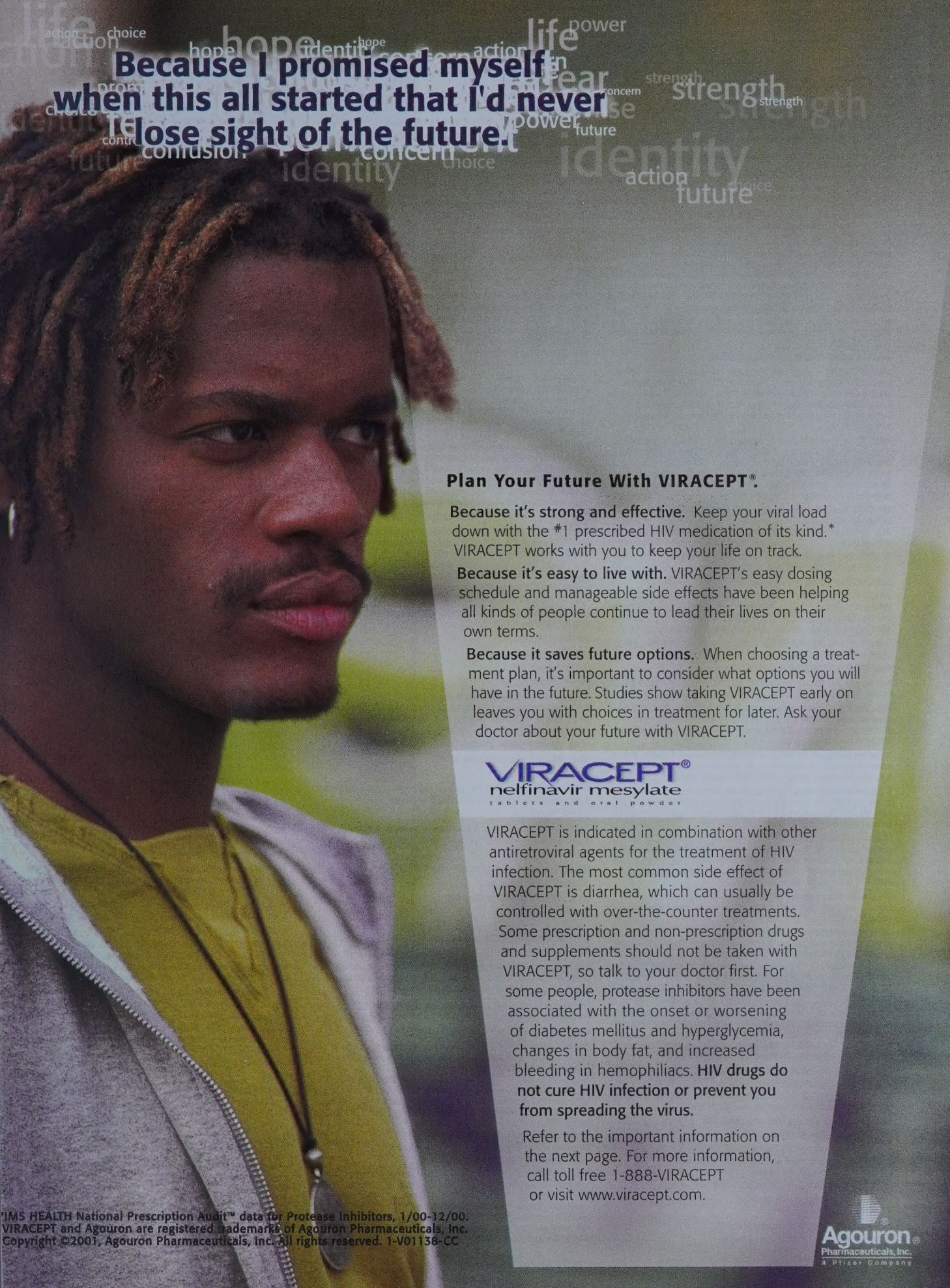
Speaking of all things sexy, *Soul Food*'s Rockmond Dunbar has been voted by the Venus staff as 'The Sexiest Man on Television.' Although Dunbar is as straight as an arrow [. . . ultra fine girlfriend!] he has become a black gay icon since his appearance in Urban World Film's *PUNKS*. Combined with Donia Allen's exclusive interview and Dunbar's sensual images, we give you 'The Rock,' a man with the heart of a saint and the body of a GOD. See for yourself, page 48.

Then its all eyes on LA. We've all wondered from time to time what really goes on in the mind of a man who has the balls to wear make up and a dress in public. Who is he? Who is in his life giving him loving support like my wife gives me? In G. B. Mann's 'Who Loves The Man in the Dress?' we're treated to a rare conversation between Mann and an everyday 'woman' in Los Angeles. Check page 74. Baby Girl has got it goin' on!

Finally, the one thing we want you to take from this issue is how to get the kind of loving you really want by practicing intimacy. On page 78 author Annette Segal spells out 9 ways you can learn to get 'Closer Than Close.'

Be safe!

Charlene Oldham



Plan Your Future With VIRACEPT®.

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Because it's easy to live with. VIRACEPT's easy dosing schedule and manageable side effects have been helping all kinds of people continue to lead their lives on their own terms.

Because it saves future options. When choosing a treatment plan, it's important to consider what options you will have in the future. Studies show taking VIRACEPT early on leaves you with choices in treatment for later. Ask your doctor about your future with VIRACEPT.

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nelfinavir mesylate
tablets and oral powder

VIRACEPT is indicated in combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of HIV infection. The most common side effect of VIRACEPT is diarrhea, which can usually be controlled with over-the-counter treatments. Some prescription and non-prescription drugs and supplements should not be taken with VIRACEPT, so talk to your doctor first. For some people, protease inhibitors have been associated with the onset or worsening of diabetes mellitus and hyperglycemia, changes in body fat, and increased bleeding in hemophiliacs. **HIV drugs do not cure HIV infection or prevent you from spreading the virus.**

Refer to the important information on the next page. For more information, call toll free 1-888-VIRACEPT or visit www.viracept.com.

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VIRACEPT®

(nelfinavir mesylate)

Tablets and Oral Powder

Information for Patients

about VIRACEPT® (Vi-ra-cept)

Generic Name: nelfinavir (nel-FIN-na-veer) mesylate

For the Treatment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection

Please read this information carefully before taking VIRACEPT. Also, please read this leaflet each time you renew the prescription, just in case anything has changed. This is a summary and not a replacement for a careful discussion with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIRACEPT when you start taking this medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when taking VIRACEPT and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

Alert: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with VIRACEPT. Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH VIRACEPT".

WHAT IS VIRACEPT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

VIRACEPT is used in combination with other antiretroviral drugs in the treatment of people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Infection with HIV leads to the destruction of CD4 T cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of CD4 cells have been destroyed, the infected person develops acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

VIRACEPT works by blocking HIV protease (a protein-cutting enzyme), which is required for HIV to multiply. VIRACEPT has been shown to significantly reduce the amount of HIV in the blood. Although VIRACEPT is not a cure for HIV or AIDS, VIRACEPT can help reduce your risk for death and illness associated with HIV. Patients who took VIRACEPT also had significant increases in the number of CD4 cell count.

VIRACEPT should be taken together with other antiretroviral drugs such as Retrovir® (zidovudine, AZT), Epivir® (lamivudine, 3TC), or Zerit® (stavudine, d4T). Taking VIRACEPT in combination with other antiretroviral drugs reduces the amount of HIV in the body (viral load) and raises CD4 counts.

VIRACEPT may be taken by adults, adolescents, and children 2 years of age or older. Studies in infants younger than 2 years of age are now taking place.

DOES VIRACEPT CURE HIV OR AIDS?

VIRACEPT is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking VIRACEPT may still develop opportunistic infections or other conditions associated with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections, and Kaposi's sarcoma.

There is no proof that VIRACEPT can reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

WHO SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT TAKE VIRACEPT?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether VIRACEPT is appropriate for you. In making your decision, the following should be considered:

Allergies: If you have had a serious allergic reaction to VIRACEPT, you must not take VIRACEPT. You should also inform your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist of any known allergies to substances such as other medicines, foods, preservatives, or dyes.

If you are pregnant: The effects of VIRACEPT on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, you should tell your doctor before taking VIRACEPT.

If you are breast-feeding: You should discuss with your doctor the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that it can be transmitted through breast-feeding. **Women should not breast-feed if they have HIV.**

Children: VIRACEPT is available for the treatment of children 2 through 13 years of age with HIV. There is a powder form of VIRACEPT that can be mixed with milk, baby formula, or foods like pudding. Instructions on how to take VIRACEPT powder can be found in a later section that discusses how VIRACEPT Oral Powder should be prepared.

If you have liver disease: VIRACEPT has not been studied in people with liver disease. If you have liver disease, you should tell your doctor before taking VIRACEPT.

Other medical problems: Certain medical problems may affect the use of VIRACEPT. Some people taking protease inhibitors have developed new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Some people with hemophilia have had increased bleeding. It is not known whether the protease inhibitors caused these problems. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have hemophilia types A and B, diabetes mellitus, or an increase in thirst and/or frequent urination.

Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking protease inhibitors. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the face, legs and arms may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

CAN VIRACEPT BE TAKEN WITH OTHER MEDICATIONS?

VIRACEPT may interact with other drugs, including those you take without a prescription. You must discuss with your doctor any drugs that you are taking or are planning to take before you take VIRACEPT.

Medicines you should <u>not</u> take with VIRACEPT:

Propulsid® (cisapride, for heartburn)

Cordarone® (amiodarone, for irregular heartbeat)

Quinidine (for irregular heartbeat), also known as Quinaglute®, Cardioquin®, Quinidex®, and others

Ergot derivatives (Cafergot® and others, for migraine headache)

Halcion® (triazolam)

Versed® (midazolam)

Mevacor® (lovastatin, for cholesterol lowering)

Zocor® (simvastatin, for cholesterol lowering)

Taking the above drugs with VIRACEPT may cause serious and/or life-threatening adverse events.

Rifampin® (for tuberculosis), also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®
This drug reduces blood levels of VIRACEPT.

Dose reduction required if you take VIRACEPT with: Mycobutin® (rifabutin, for MAC); you will need to take a lower dose of Mycobutin.

A change of therapy should be considered if you are taking VIRACEPT with:

Phenobarbital

Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)

Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)

These agents may reduce the amount of VIRACEPT in your blood and make it less effective.

Oral contraceptives ("the pill")

If you are taking the pill to prevent pregnancy, you should use a different type of contraception since VIRACEPT may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.

Special considerations

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with VIRACEPT, talk to your doctor about possible drug interactions and side effects. If you take Viagra and VIRACEPT together, you may be at increased risk of side effects of Viagra such as low blood pressure, visual changes, and penile erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, you should seek immediate medical assistance to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

It is not recommended to take VIRACEPT with the cholesterol-lowering drugs Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible drug interactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between VIRACEPT and Lipitor® (atorvastatin) and Baycol® (cerivastatin); talk to your doctor before you take either of these cholesterol reducing drugs with VIRACEPT.

Taking St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort with VIRACEPT is not recommended. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or are planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease VIRACEPT levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to VIRACEPT or cross resistance to other antiretroviral drugs.

HOW SHOULD VIRACEPT BE TAKEN WITH OTHER ANTI-HIV DRUGS?

Taking VIRACEPT together with other anti-HIV drugs increases their ability to fight the virus. It also reduces the opportunity for resistant viruses to grow. Based on your history of taking other anti-HIV medicine, your doctor will direct you on how to take VIRACEPT and other anti-HIV medicines. These drugs should be taken in a certain order or at specific times. This will depend on how many times a day each medicine should be taken. It will also depend on whether it should be taken with or without food.

Nucleoside analogues: No drug interaction problems were seen when VIRACEPT was given with:

Retrovir (zidovudine, AZT)

Epivir (lamivudine, 3TC)

Zerit (stavudine, d4T)

Videx® (didanosine, ddI)

If you are taking both Videx (ddI) and VIRACEPT:
Videx should be taken without food, on an empty stomach. Therefore, you should take VIRACEPT with food one hour after or more than two hours before you take Videx.

Nonnucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs):

When VIRACEPT is taken together with:

Viramune® (nevirapine)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood is unchanged. A dose adjustment is not needed when VIRACEPT is used with Viramune.

Sustiva™ (efavirenz)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood may be increased. A dose adjustment is not needed when VIRACEPT is used with Sustiva.

Other NNRTIs

VIRACEPT has not been studied with other NNRTIs.

Other protease inhibitors:

When VIRACEPT is taken together with:

Crixivan® (indinavir)

The amount of both drugs in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

Norvir™ (ritonavir)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

Invirase® (saquinavir)

The amount of saquinavir in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF VIRACEPT?

Like all medicines, VIRACEPT can cause side effects. Most of the side effects experienced with VIRACEPT have been mild to moderate. Diarrhea is the most common side effect in people taking VIRACEPT, and most adult patients had at least mild diarrhea at some point during treatment. In clinical studies, about 15-20% of patients receiving VIRACEPT 750 mg (three tablets) three times daily or 1250 mg (five tablets) two times daily had four or more loose stools a day. In most cases, diarrhea can be controlled using antidiarrheal medicines, such as Imodium® A-D (loperamide) and others, which are available without a prescription.

Other side effects that occurred in 2% or more of patients receiving VIRACEPT include nausea, gas and rash.

There were other side effects noted in clinical studies that occurred in less than 2% of patients receiving VIRACEPT. However, these side effects may have been due to other drugs that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Except for diarrhea, there were not many differences in side effects in patients who took VIRACEPT along with other drugs compared with those who took only the other drugs. For a complete list of side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

HOW SHOULD I TAKE VIRACEPT?

VIRACEPT is available only with your doctor's prescription. Your doctor may prescribe the light blue VIRACEPT Tablets either as 1250 mg (five tablets) taken two times a day or as 750 mg (three tablets) taken three times a day. VIRACEPT should always be taken with a meal or a light snack. VIRACEPT tablets are film-coated to help make the tablets easier to swallow.

Take VIRACEPT exactly as directed by your doctor. Do not increase or decrease any dose or the number of doses per day. Also, take this medicine for the exact period of time that your doctor has instructed. **Do not stop taking VIRACEPT without first consulting with your doctor, even if you are feeling better.**

Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give VIRACEPT to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

The dosing of VIRACEPT may be different for you than for other patients. **Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.** The amount of VIRACEPT in the blood should remain somewhat consistent over time. Missing doses will cause the concentration of VIRACEPT to decrease; therefore, **you should not miss any doses.** However, if you miss a dose, you should take the dose as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose and future doses as originally scheduled.

Dosing in adults (including children 14 years of age and older)

The recommended adult dose of VIRACEPT is 1250 mg (five tablets) taken two times a day or 750 mg (three tablets) taken three times a day. Each dose should be taken with a meal or light snack.

Dosing in children 2 to 13 years of age

The VIRACEPT dose in children depends on their weight. The recommended dose is 20 to 30 mg/kg (or 9 to 14 mg/pound) per dose, taken three times daily with a meal or light snack. This can be administered either in tablet form or, in children unable to take tablets, as VIRACEPT Oral Powder.

Dose instructions will be provided by the child's doctor. The dose will be given three times daily using the measuring scoop provided, a measuring teaspoon, or one or more tablets depending on the weight and age of the child. The amount of oral powder or tablets to be given to a child is described in the chart below.

Pediatric Dose to Be Administered Three Times Daily

Body Weight		Number of	Number of	Number of
Kg	Lb	Level Scoops*	Level Teaspoons†	Tablets
7 to <8.5	15.5 to <18.5	4	1	—
8.5 to <10.5	18.5 to <23	5	1 1/4	—
10.5 to <12	23 to <26.5	6	1 1/2	—
12 to <14	26.5 to <31	7	1 3/4	—
14 to <16	31 to <35	8	2	—
16 to <18	35 to <39.5	9	2 1/4	—
18 to <23	39.5 to <50.5	10	2 1/2	2
≥23	≥50.5	15	3 3/4	3

In measuring oral powder, the scoop or teaspoon should be level.

* 1 level scoop contains 50 mg of VIRACEPT. Use only the scoop provided with your VIRACEPT bottle.

† 1 level teaspoon contains 200 mg of VIRACEPT. Note: **A measuring teaspoon used for dispensing medication** should be used for measuring VIRACEPT Oral Powder. Ask your pharmacist to make sure you have a medication dispensing teaspoon.

How should VIRACEPT Oral Powder be prepared?

The oral powder may be mixed with a small amount of water, milk, formula, soy formula, soy milk, dietary supplements, or dairy foods such as pudding or ice cream. Once mixed, the entire amount must be taken to obtain the full dose.

Do **not** mix the powder with any acidic food or juice, such as orange or grapefruit juice, apple juice, or apple sauce, because this may create a bitter taste.

Once the powder is mixed, it may be stored at room temperature or refrigerated for up to 6 hours. Do **not** heat the mixed dose once it has been prepared.

Do **not** add water to bottles of oral powder.

VIRACEPT powder is supplied with a scoop for measuring. For help in determining the exact dose of powder for your child, please ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

VIRACEPT Oral Powder contains aspartame, a low-calorie sweetener, and therefore should not be taken by children with phenylketonuria (PKU).

HOW SHOULD VIRACEPT BE STORED?

Keep VIRACEPT and all other medicines out of the reach of children. Keep bottle closed and store at room temperature (between 59°F and 86°F) away from sources of moisture such as a sink or other damp place. Heat and moisture may reduce the effectiveness of VIRACEPT.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

Discuss all questions about your health with your doctor. If you have questions about VIRACEPT or any other medication you are taking, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You can also call 1.888.VIRACEPT (1.888.847.2237) toll free.

Call 1.888.VIRACEPT

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Publisher/Editor-in-Chief	CHARLENE COTHRAN
Assistant to Publisher	Kevin Chamberlain

EDITORIAL

Executive Editor	Malcolm Venerable
Copy Editor	Nikki Hopewell
Fashion Stylist	Jerry Jordan Brown
Contributing Writers	Retha Powers, Walter Greene, Milly Schoenbaum, Chuck Tarver, G.B. Mann, Phil Petrie, Michael K. Watts, Prince-Leon Kusi, Donia Allen, Stanley Bennet Clay, Annette Segal, Shanti B. Rangwani, M.B.B.S
Photography	Debra St. John, Mick Hicks, Ron Singleton, Kairo Allen, Stewart Van deZee, Tina Paul, Carl Posey, Stanley Debas, Jeff Gamble

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

National Advertising Director	Charlene Cothran Higher Ground Marketing Group 914/376-6161
Chicago, Atlanta, Miami	Milton Simpson Forward Communications 404/875-1218

PRODUCTION

Art Director	Higher Ground Creative Group
Associate Art Director	Frank Madaio
Production Manager	Garnet Wilson

CIRCULATION

Director of Circulation	Marian Farrah
New Subscribers, Address Changes, Back Issue Orders	800/642-7535 or www.venusmagazine.com

CCI

Venus is published 6 times per year by
Cothran Communications, Inc.
P. O. Box 150
Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706
914-376-6161 / Fax 914-376-4441

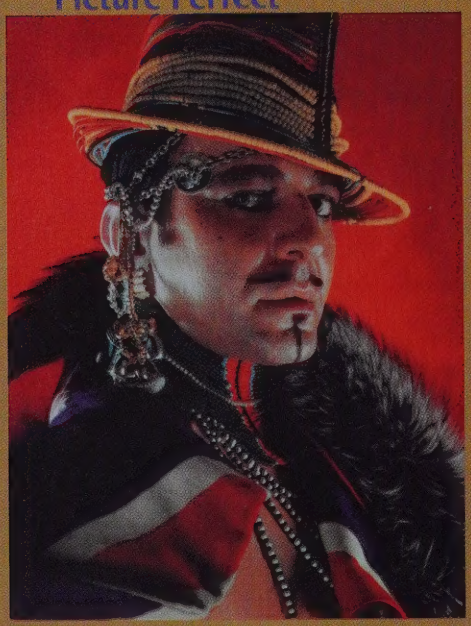
Grown and Gone

For 50 years, Vivian Hewitt and her late husband, John, amassed a treasure trove of art created by African Americans, and now the world will have a chance to see and experience them at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Okla. "In a sense, the paintings became our children," said Vivian Hewitt. "Now we focus on celebrating how the collection will be used to educate and promote African-American artists." For more information, visit www.gilcrease.org.

HIM

Philadelphia fashion and commercial photographer Bryan Mell has unveiled "HIM ... A Tribute to the Black Male Aesthetic," a sizzling collection of stills that highlights the timeless beauty of the black male. Originals and cards available at Giovanni's Room, Philadelphia, Pa.

Picture Perfect



With a portfolio boasting Janet, Diana, Madonna, and Naomi, lauded portrait photographer Mario Testino is sharing his celebrated images at the first ever Testino Gallery Exhibition at the National Portrait gallery in London. The exhibit runs through June 2, 2002.

FAGGOT on the Rise

Written and performed by prolific Atlanta-based artist Lynwoodt Benard, *FAGGOT*, as it is bluntly called, was recently performed to much acclaim at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, N.C. The story of a young man's homoerotic rite of passage, *FAGGOT* runs the gamut from spiritual warfare to self-salvation, making rape, alcoholism and attempted suicide stops along the way.

Benard hopes his show can help "black gay men know that who they are is enough. Period. And [they should] love themselves regardless." The only gay-themed play at the Winston-Salem Festival, Benard thought he might have problems pulling an audience, "but the family came out, as well as general supporters and the curious."

Actress Loretta Divine also stepped in to help. "There's a mother's voice-over in the production and she came aboard and did it for free!

"She was wonderful. She said she had a lot of black gay friends and that black folks need to hear this."

The play is slated for a June production in San Francisco; plus Jomandi Productions, Atlanta's only African-American theatre company, known for avoiding overtly gay material, is now considering the show, bringing *FAGGOT* full circle.

The Art Of Ansel Pitcairn

One staple in the life of Brooklyn artist Ansel Pitcairn has been his love for the visual and creative arts of all types. Born in London, Pitcairn is the son of Trinidadian parents who migrated to America in the early '70s. He earned his master's in illustration from New York's School of Visual Arts where he taught for several years afterward. Displayed above is a work from his Indigenous Series. Dutton books is publishing Pitcairn's first illustrated book for children, *Twenty Portraits of Famous African-Americans*, **written by Tonya Bolden.**

sophisticated mary

words by Stanley Bennett Clay

Original Supreme Mary Wilson has been out all morning looking at brownstones in Harlem, N.Y. She makes it back home just in time for our early afternoon interview. The last time I saw the beautiful 58-year-old legend was last year at the Sunset Junction Street Fair in Los Angeles. She wowed the crowd with a down-home graciousness as famous as her glamour and boasted a determination that has kept her a cultural force to be reckoned with for parts of five decades. Despite the ups and downs of a long and winding career and one personal crisis after another, Mary Wilson was and is a living example of a survivor.

"I feel that a lot of our early traditional music has been so overlooked. I want to keep that music alive for future generations."

"I was in a car accident where I almost lost my life. I did lose my son. That prompted me to make some major decisions about my life. And one of them was [that] I decided it was time to make a major move and to keep myself very, very busy. I always wanted to attend college, I always wanted to do Broadway, and so, having had that near brush with death, I decided to pursue everything in life I wanted to pursue."

In 1995, she left Beverly Hills and relocated to New York where she pursued an acting career on the legitimate stage and earned an Associate's of Arts degree from NYU. Today, Mary is touring the country as the star of her own production of *Sophisticated Ladies*, the tribute to jazz great Duke Ellington. Wilson's version will mark the first time since the late 1980s that this American treasure has toured nationally.

By the end of the 1930s, Ellington would write classic compositions that defined the entire decade: "It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got That Swing" and "Sophisticated Lady," to name a few. "I feel that a lot of our early traditional music has been so overlooked. I want to keep that music alive for future generations; that Afro-American tradition has got to stay alive in the new generation's minds so that it will not be lost."

Keeping her own legacy alive is also of vital importance, prompting a bittersweet decision that reverberated throughout the pop music world.

"You know, people always say, 'We're glad about the decision you made [not to do The Supremes Reunion Tour]', but I'm not glad about having had to make that decision. I would have preferred to have been on the tour. But sometimes in life you're given certain life experiences that give you the knowledge and wisdom to know what's important to you in your life. I realized what's important to me is my integrity."

Author, actress, singer, survivor, Wilson now adds theatrical producer to her list of accomplishments. Perhaps the very thing that has prepared her best is knowing how to take care of herself first. "Being a woman, I'm constantly buying the little creams and going to my face places, and getting my massages and doing those things. At 58, you do have to do a little bit more."

Wilson has come through her share of adversities. Her latest book features a chapter entitled "Theft of a Dream," which details how she lost the name "The Supremes" to Motown. "I do wonder why so many things I've started I'm not able to finish. I believe that sometimes in life, somewhere we made these decisions and we have to follow through with them, so if it was my decision to have a hard life --I just wake up every morning, smile and feel blessed and keep on going with one foot in front of the other. And let me tell you, I love what I do, I love who I am. We all would like to avoid life's hardships. They gives you lines, honey. And I don't like lines!"

Sophisticated Ladies will play 32 U.S. cities. For national tour information, visit www.marywilson.com.

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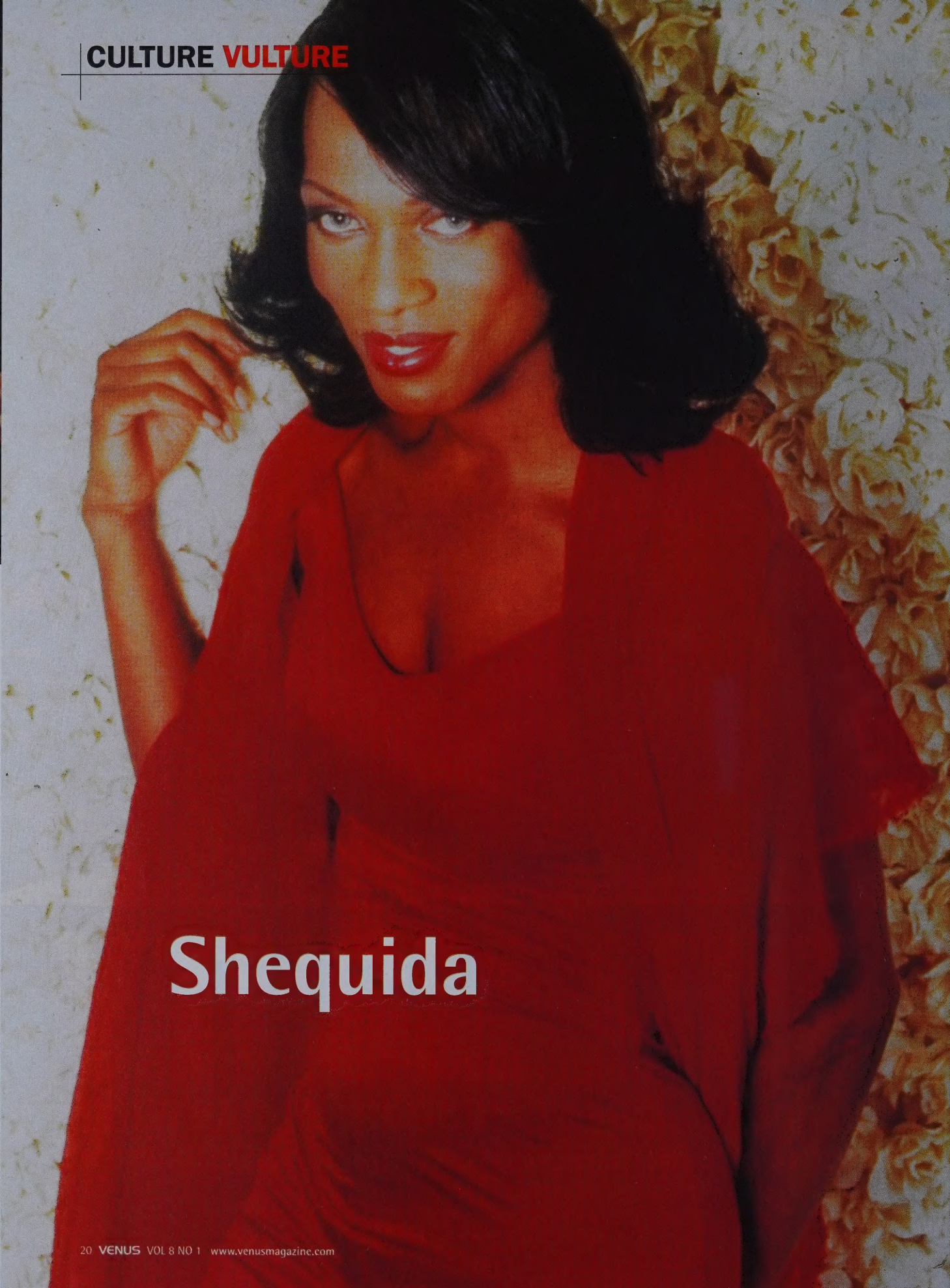


Shequida

more than a woman

words by Walter Greene

He is not your ordinary drag performer who lip-syncs and glows in pure fantasy. Shequida sings for real, and in his stunning stage performance, the willowy beauty gives the audience a slice of his own life. First and foremost, Shequida is a Julliard trained opera singer and has been singing and entertaining since he was 5 years old. "I saw my first opera when I was 14. I saw the New York City

The highlight of his show is a segment called "The Three Divas" in which he impersonates Jessye Norman, Maria Callas and Kathleen Battle singing on stage together.

Opera do Boito's *Mefistofele* with Samuel Ramey singing the title role. When the trumpets blared and the most beautiful voices filled the room, I was spellbound. When the lights came up and I saw the costumes and the set, I was hooked. It was beautiful, I love the drama in it and the style of writing," recalled Shequida who was born Gary Hall in Jamaica, West Indies. When he was 12 years old, the family migrated to Manhattan, N.Y., and he attended La Guardia High School for the Performing Arts before going to Julliard.

Now, when Shequida hits the stage, it's like pure magic. The air of professionalism is ever present. Every move, every nuance of his performance is that of a true star. The gowns, the hair, the makeup is all perfection, and teamed with the amazing voice, Shequida is truly a stunning act worthy of bravos. The highlight of his show is when Shequida does a segment called "The Three Divas" in which he impersonates Jessye Norman, Maria Callas and Kathleen Battle singing onstage together. Shequida captures the essence of these divas utilizing her powerful vocals to bring these woman to the audience with great comedic flair. Using his five-octave range, this talented performer also eases effortlessly into classic standards like "Fly Me To The Moon," "Luck Be A Lady Tonight" and "Where E'er You Walk."

"The drag is just a part of the illusion. I am a gender illusionist," Shaquida said. "I like to make it so you can't tell where the eyelashes begin and the glue ends, where the wig begins and the fake nails start. Being in drag is all part of the glamour. . . It's all part of being an entertainer."

Shequida's talents are vast. He's been a regualar on the ABC soap opera *One Life To Live* where he plays the bartender with a secret . . . the campy Wendi Mercury. He has done the Manhattan club circuit and has also toured Europe. Shequida spent three consecutive years performing in Vienna, Paris, Berlin and Hamburg and had to have bodyguards in Tel Aviv. "My show is not just a drag show, it's a show for everybody. That's why we promote the show to the public in general and not just the gay community. The fact that I'm in drag has nothing to do with it. If you go to *Cats* and you see the person up there singing "Memory" in a cat suit, you don't think that person lives like that during the day, do you?"

Maria Emilia Breyer
rhythm's sister

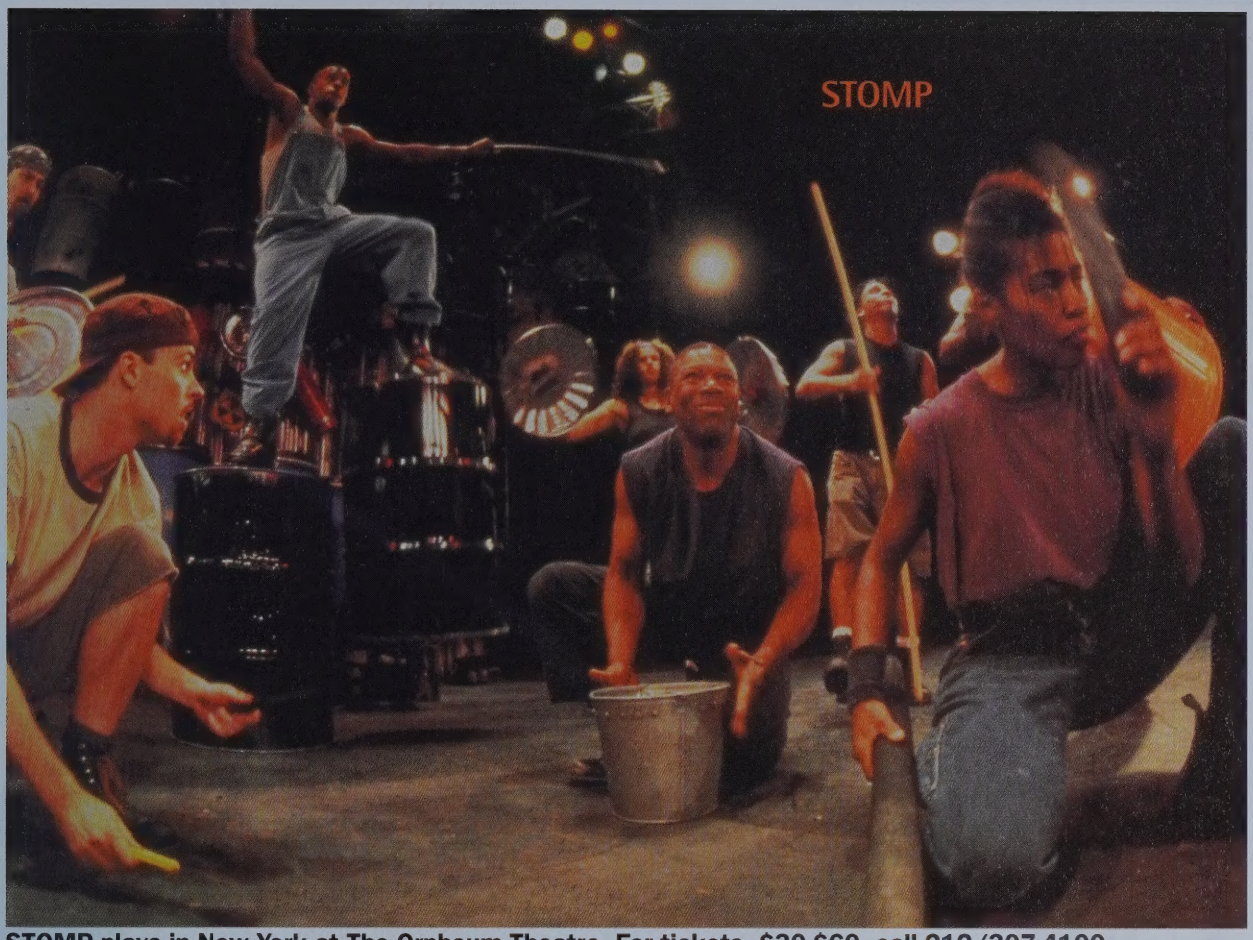
Brazilian-born percussionist, Maria Breyer takes time from her schedule to talk to *Venus* about performing in the international sensation, *STOMP*. Oh, and she happens to be out and proud. She enjoys the openness of New York and reports on how closed lesbian life is in her homeland.

"My parents didn't want me to play drums. Drums were for boys, so they gave me a classical guitar and piano lessons. I promptly turned the guitar over and drummed on its backside."

VENUS: How long has drumming been in your blood?
MARIA: I have been a drummer/percussionist for over 20 years. I began on trash cans, pots and pans, whatever I could get my hands on. I made my first drumsticks out of some tree branches or No. 2 pencils. Then one marvelous day I found a pair of real drumsticks in a public park. I think I still have them somewhere; I treasure them. My parents didn't want me to play drums. Drums were for boys so they gave me a classical guitar and piano lessons. I promptly turned the guitar over and drummed on its backside. I didn't have the patience for the piano, plus it was too big to carry around.

VENUS: How did you prepare for *STOMP*?
MARIA: I didn't really prepare myself for the show. It just kinda fell into my path. I didn't even know about the show until a friend took me to see it. Then about three months later, the same friend called me and persuaded me to go to the audition. I auditioned twice before I got called back. Somehow I ended up in it. The drumming part was easy for me, but the dancing was a little more challenging. As a drummer, I was used to using the upper part of my body more. I had to beg my feet to cooperate with the rest of me. Thank God I didn't have to shake my ass. I am Brazilian. I can Samba, but *STOMP* has nothing to do with that kind of movement.

VENUS: How is "lesbian life" experienced in Brazil?
MARIA: Life for lesbians in Brazil is very much still closeted. It's more accepted if you are a man. It's kind of like don't ask, don't tell. There are some famous women singers who are out. For some reason it's OK for artists to be out, but for the regular gal, it's still very difficult. In fact, we just lost a great singer named Cassia Eller. She passed just before the new year. She was *very* out, an in-your-face strong, outspoken lesbian. Cassia was somewhat of a spokesperson for the gay community in Brazil. She made it a little easier for us. We'll miss her very much.



STOMP plays in New York at The Orpheum Theatre. For tickets, $30-$60, call 212/307-4100.

Life for lesbians and gays is slowly changing, however. I remember being unable to speak about anything gay, and now it seems that especially in the younger generation (45 and below) it is more accepting. The media has a lot to do with it. *Queer as Folk* does play in Brazil! There are many more lesbians surfacing. I went to a gay bar in Rio last year where they were promoting the first ever "Ladies Night." The place was packed! Last year in São Paulo a woman was elected to the senate who is very gay-friendly. She believes in gay rights and has begun to shake things up one step at a time.

VENUS: Where were you on September 11th?
MARIA: My partner and I were sleeping when we got a call from a friend telling us to turn on the TV. When we saw the horror we raced up to the rooftop to see if it was really true. It was so surreal. We saw the towers come down before our eyes. It took about 15 minutes for the acid air to reach our rooftop in Brooklyn. We tasted the dust in our mouths and rubbed it from our eyes. It was true, and we were scared.

After the dust settled, things would change all over this city. Everyone was really quiet. Going to the theater in the subway, I could feel the silent tension and fear around me. One could also feel a strange kind of unity or concern. People became somehow a bit more patient and tolerant of one another. No one wanted to do anything but stay home. We agreed to take a pay cut to continue the production because Broadway and many businesses lost money. Things have settled down a bit now.

VENUS: Any new projects in the works?
MARIA: I'm just chilling out for a while. I've taken myself out of the loop to spend some time with my new partner. I had been single for so long because I toured for almost four years. I worked so much. I'm just enjoying nesting for now. I have a little something planned in Brazil next year. I'm also thinking about reviving a little percussion ensemble I used to have. . . We'll see.

one mo' time

by MILLY SCHOENBAUM
written in 1979.

A sultry, sensual night in 1926 at New Orleans' renowned Lyric Theatre is recreated in a reprisal of the jazz musical One Mo Time. The Charleston, the cakewalk and the rag are the dance rages as Vaudeville's greatest tunes blaze through the theater, a haven for such stars as Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. Revisiting a starring role in the off-Broadway sensation is Vernel Bagneris, who writes and directs.

In the once-luxurious French Quarter of old New Orleans, two streets meet on the corner of Iberville and Burgundy. Implanted on the sidewalk on that historic corner is the sole word "LYRIC" in a robin's-egg blue tile. That tile is the only survivor of a fire in 1927, which destroyed a bastion of the T.O.B.A. circuit (Theatre Owners Booking Agency or, as the performers named it, Tough on Black Asses, Or Acts if you will, because it paid so little except to headliners), and left only an empty space used today as a parking lot. Would it be possible, if you stood very quietly, say at midnight on any Saturday night, to hear the ghostly reminders of the earthly sounds of black vaudeville resounding through the halls? Of such great immortals as Bessie Smith, who was a headliner on the circuit back then, or Butterbeans and Susie, Ma Rainey, Wilbur Sweatman and his clarinet, or Sweet Mama Stringbean (whose real name was Ethel Waters)? These were just some of the names who graced the Lyric Theatre's stage before the decline and slow death of T.O.B.A. during the depression.

Regardless of educational and economic level, blacks were not allowed to attend the French Opera house or the symphony, concerts and ballets that traveled to New Orleans. The Lyric Theatre, therefore, had to satisfy all levels of taste for its audiences. Imagine the eclectic spectacle of opera singers preceding black-faced comedians, or classically trained dancers following the hi-jinks of clowns and jugglers, or soulful blues and jazz before dramatic arias. The Lyric audiences would simply watch what they liked, keep their ticket stubs, and go out to smoke a cigarette while waiting until an act they liked went on.

A company traveling under the auspices of T.O.B.A. would travel "second-class" train to such cities as Memphis, Atlanta, New Orleans, but also small southern hamlets. Costumes and sets were minimal and center-stage singing or comedy routines were most popular. As one lady said, "It was your turn up, you took center-stage and let 'em know it, 'cause if they didn't like what you was doing up there, they would sure let you know it!" The audience was "all colored," but whites were allowed in the balcony to watch the Saturday midnight show only—Whites and blacks were not allowed under the same roof by law but the after-hours places in the red-light district didn't mind, and neither did the Lyric Theatre. The law simply didn't count.

The performers were expected to work with the house band on the circuit, and luckily New Orleans was blessed with great sidemen. The New Orleans band, in particular, had a fine reputation as an excellent pit band that was a pleasure to play with.

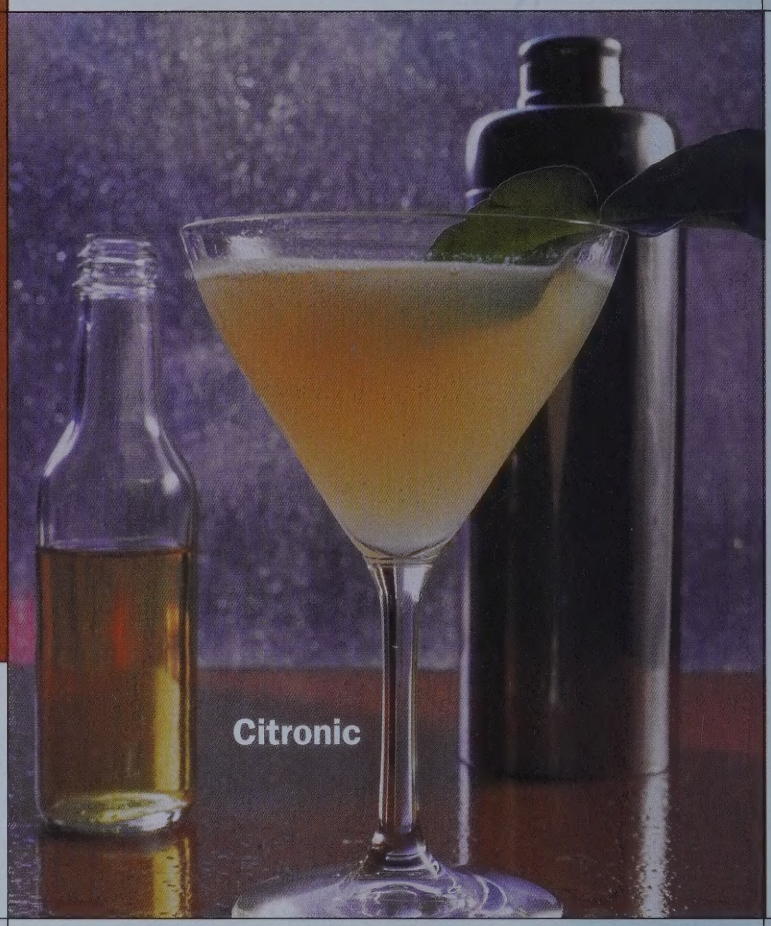
The cost of admission was twenty-five cents and that usually included someone walking away with the door prize—usually a coveted

Continued on page 87

Photography by Carl Posey (l-r) B.J. Crosby, Roz Ryan, Vernel Bagneris, and Rosalind Brown in a scene from ONE MO'TIME. *Longacre Theatre. 220 W. 48th St. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8 PM with matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2PM and Sundays at 3 PM. Tickets $30-$75 through Telecharge 212.239.6200.*

Mixologist Jerri Banks

Cocktail Queen



Jerri Banks was 19 years old when she had her first sip of wine. Little did she know that swig would lead her on a journey to make her one of New York's most revered connoisseurs of wines and cocktails.

When she started out in 1975, black women were an oddity in the male-dominated wine world. Jerri pursued her passion in a roundabout way, learning "by doing" -- voraciously tasting anything she could, and paying attention to the complexity of each wine.

In Philadelphia, Jerri worked with the renowned – but then quite humble -- White Dog Café. Jerri quickly impressed owner Judy Wicks and became manager of the restaurant's beverage program. Journeys to Portugal, France and Germany added to Jerri's wine expertise.

Armed with knowledge to match her passion, Jerri trekked to New York City to try selling wine to restaurants. Although she studied and sold wine, Jerri's bartending years made her miss the customer interaction that fueled her innovative cocktail recipes and creative concoctions. She abandoned sales.

Hands-on restaurant experience took her to higher levels: She managed Cellar in the Sky, formerly located in Windows on the World; she then worked with Chef Matthew

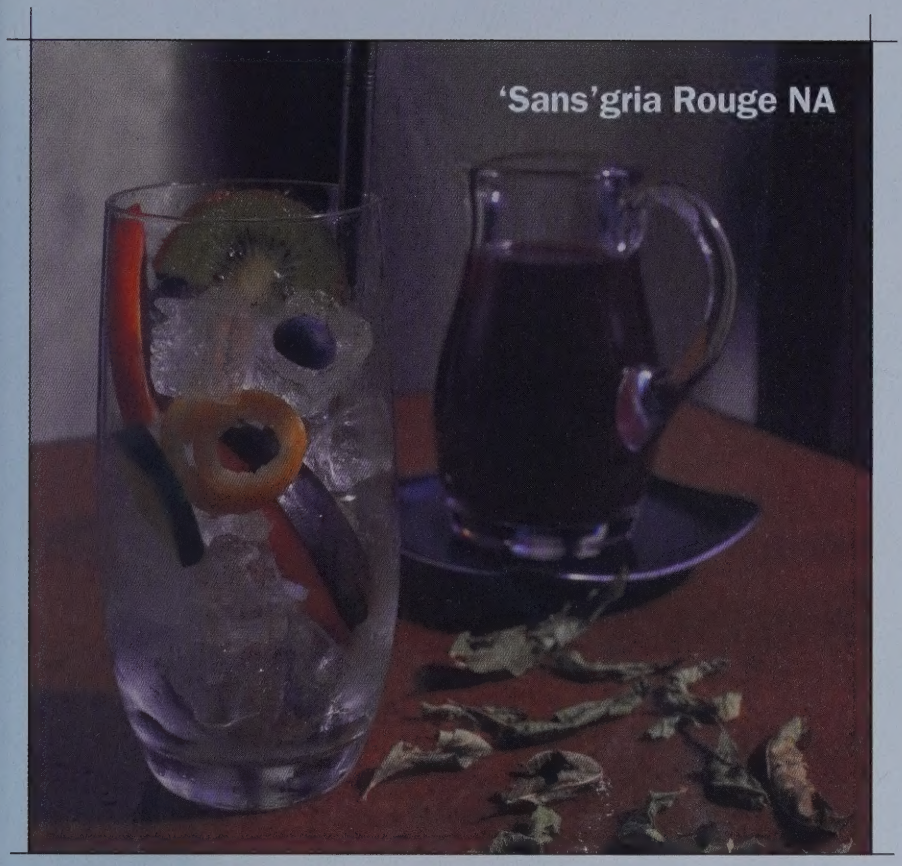
This is the ultimate adult lemonade. Combining four variations of lemony components including one herbal form, this delicate citrus cocktail tantalizes as it refreshes.

2 ozs Absolut Vodka
1 oz A. Pollentes Crème aux Citrons or Limoncello
*2 ozs Kaffir Lime-Lemon Juice Mixture**
Chilled Cocktail Glass
Kaffir Lime Leaf for garnish

Kaffir Lime-Lemon Juice
Approx. _ cup Fresh Kaffir Lime Leaves
2 cups Fresh Lemon Juice
2 cups Simple Syrup

Place all ingredients in blender and pulse blend until mixture is bright green but not completely blended. Strain through fine chinois or cheesecloth. Combine remaining ingredients with ice in cocktail shaker and shake vigorously. Strain into chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with kaffir lime leaf.

Kaffir lime leaf is a principle ingredient in many Asian cuisines. It is commonly found at Asian markets and also may be available at specialty stores. Choose leaves that are bright green. For a non-alcoholic version: Pour 3 ozs Kaffir Lime-Lemon Juice over ice and top with seltzer.



What do you drink when alcohol is neither appropriate nor desired? It looks like wine, but there the comparison ends. These verbena tea and pomegranate juice bases are perfect hosts for the aromatics–cardamom pods, star anise, allspice and citrus–used in this non-alcoholic libation.

Kenney in 1988, developing comprehensive service and beverage programs for each of his popular locations. Jerri developed some of the most sought-after house drinks, including the famous Juniperotivo.

Next stop was Fressen, in Manhattan's trendy meatpacking district. She delighted yuppies with herb infused cocktails and such fun-sounding drinks as the "Fressen-Up" and the white wine "Sans-gria." *The New York Times* called her the "High Priestess of the grape" able to drum up a "rock & roll" list when appropriate.

Now consulting with restaurants throughout New York, she's still innovating. She spearheaded *Ladies Who Launch*, a consulting service for new and established businesses, and Drink and Be Married, a Bridal Shower program that artfully pairs food and wine in synch with the themes of the wedding.

It started with Jerri's first sip 25 years ago, and she now remains immersed in the world of beverages -- learning, teaching, tasting and creating.

'Sans'gria Rouge NA

Makes approx 4 gals

4 qts Knudsens Pomegranate juice (can be found at health food stores,) 4 qts lemon verbena tea (4 qts water steeped 5 minutes with 2 cups tea leaves)
1 cup fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup cardamom pods
1/4 cup of star anise
6-10 whole allspice seeds
1 orange sliced
1 lemon sliced
1-2 cups simple syrup (equal amounts sugar and water brought to boil and cooled)
Add fresh fruits and berries for garnish.

Combine juices, tea, spices and sliced citrus. Let steep for minimum 8 hrs. Flavor will become more intense as spices remain. Strain and adjust sweetening to taste with simple syrup. Serve over ice with fresh fruits and berries.

The British are Coming!

What they failed to accom[lish through war and the imposition of taxes, the British seem to be doing through the taste buds...that is, conquering the American people. And, from all accounts, they are succeeding, thus far.

The British firm, Halewood International, through its US sibsidiary, Halewood USA, is quietly introducing Americans to Lambrini Bianco, a light, mild, while, and slightly sparklting, wine. Only this wine is made from pears and apples, not grapes.

The English have enjoyed it for years, a brisk 11 million cases annually. Now the company has turned its attention to the United States and canadian markets.

Lambrini Bianco appeals to yonger women ages 18-34 and to all consumers, including men, who are looking for an alternative to beer or the traditional wine. Its alcholic content is 6.9%. One of a kind, Lambrini Bianco has no competition in the United States and hopes to cut into the 7 million cases a year Arbor Mist category market. It is quietly succeeding. Why? Maybe because of the uniqueness of the drink.

Emboldened by the success of Lambrini Bianco, Halewood-USA, based in New Rochelle, Westchester, has also introduced Caribbean twist to the US. market. Bottoms up!

The Imperial Fez

Owners Rafih and Rita Bellejoun and staff

Don't expect the traditional setting at Atlanta Imperial Fez restaurant. It's anything but. It's like stepping off U.S. soil and into the mystical, mysterious and magical land of Morocco.

Rafih, a native of Morocco, has an eclectic background in cinema, photography, and ceramics, as evidenced by the room's rich décor.

Get comfy right from the start by removing your shoes before being escorted into the dining room, the restaurants costume. Oil burning lanterns light the way to your table and create a sensual atmosphere perfect for privacy and romance. The walls are adorned with Middle Eastern plum-textured patterns. Elaborate antique carpets seem to tell your toes a story all their own.

There's an eyeful of Morrocan history in every corner. You could almost expect to see a sultan or pasha wandering about in his stately robe and turban. Instead, you'll find the Imperial Fez's owner and host, Rafih Bellejoun and his wife, Rita, garbed in traditional attire. Rafih, a native of Morocco, has an eclectic background in cinema, photography and ceramics, as evidenced by the room's rich décor.

In 1975, Rafih opened the first of several successful restaurants in Colorado. He managed to find time to take on several other endeavors including joining a fencing club and working closely with the Winter Olympic Games. "The Imperial Fez is a culmination of all my experiences," says Rafih who opened his Atlanta restaurant in 1991. It has been a landmark in the city ever since.

A respected and celebrated businessman, Rafih has garnered many awards, including "Businessman of the Year" from the African Chamber of Commerce. He enjoys first-time guests the most. "I love sharing the rich culture of my homeland and treating our guests as royalty."

Once seated on ample floor pillows spaced about your table, it's time for the washing of hands as cleansing waters are poured from the traditional tah by your server.

For those unfamiliar with authentic Morrocan cuisine, perusing the menu may require an interpreter. For starters try Harira [lentil bean soup,] which delights the palate and warms the throat. An excellent entree selection is Lamb Maassas B'Looze [honey and almonds]. Prepare to become intoxicated with the perfect blend of sweetness, saltiness and the natural flavor of lamb. To complement this delectable meal, order a plate of vegetable and prawn couscous, all of which is eaten in the Morrocan tradition, with your fingers and hands. For dessert, Briouat, a lusciously pastry, is heavenly.

As exotic as the meal itself is the entertainment. You haven't lived until a trio of curvaceous Morrocan belly dancers wind their way to your table and flirtatiously entice you to join in. Only the brave dare, but what a dance! Veils and garments flowing, they use everything from candles to flames and swords to interpret the stories of the melodious music.

If you want to experience the wonders of a rich, exciting and sensual culture of Morroco then make a note to visit the Imperial Fez the next time you're in Atlanta.

Getting There:

The Imperial Fez is located at 285 Peachtree RD, N.E., Buckhead area of Atlanta, Georgia. Reservations are suggested. Call 404/351-0870. Dinner hours, 6pm to 11:30pm. Belly dancing nightly. Private parties by request.
www.imperialfez.com

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Alize Confit Of Shrimp with Sugarsnap Peas, Curried Pineapple and Passion Fruit Essence

INGREDIENTS:
2 cups olive oil
1 lb jumbo shrimp, about 12 peeled shrimp
1 cup sugarsnap peas, halved
1 pound baby spinach or tatsoi
1 pineapple, cut into 1 inch semi circles

Pineapple Curry Dressing
flavored with Alize essence:
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 shallots, sliced
1 cup pineapple trimmings
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 tablespoon Szechuan peppercorns
2 teaspoons coriander seed
2 pieces star anise
2 tablespoon chopped ginger
1 small fennel bulb, sliced
1 cup Gold Alize
(fine French Cognac, Passion Fruit)
1 cup sherry wine vinegar
1 cup dark chicken stock
2 tablespoons curry paste
1 cup grapeseed oil
1 cup olive oil

PREPARATION:
Roasted pineapple:
Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Place pineapple rounds on baking sheet. Sprinkle with ground black pepper. Bake at drying heat for two hours or until oven-dried. The pineapple will just begin to brown. Remove from oven, remove core and cut into sections.

Pineapple curry dressing:
In 4 qt. saucepot, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add shallots. Cook until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add pineapple, spices, ginger, fennel. Cook mixture until caramelized or brown in color. Add vinegar and Alize. Reduce by simmering. Add curry paste and stock. Cook over low heat until thickened. Puree mixture in food processor. Strain through chinois. Emulsify with hand blender by adding oils slowly. Season to taste.

To plate salad:
In wide bottomed saucepot, heat oil below a simmer, approximately 130 degrees. Add shrimp and cook 2-3 minutes, depending on size of the shrimp. Do not allow to boil. Remove from oil. Toss together sugarsnap peas, pineapple and tatsoi. Season with salt and curry dressing. Garnish with shrimp. Drizzle with reduced balsamic vinegar. Note: The shrimp is best served warm or at room temperature.

Alize Confit of Shrimp

Diane Forley, owner and Executive Chef of Verbena Restaurant & Courtyard Garden in New York City, created a quick and easy recipe inspired by tropical breezes, sandy beaches and passion.

inspired leather crafts

by Keyi Ko Afrikan Arts

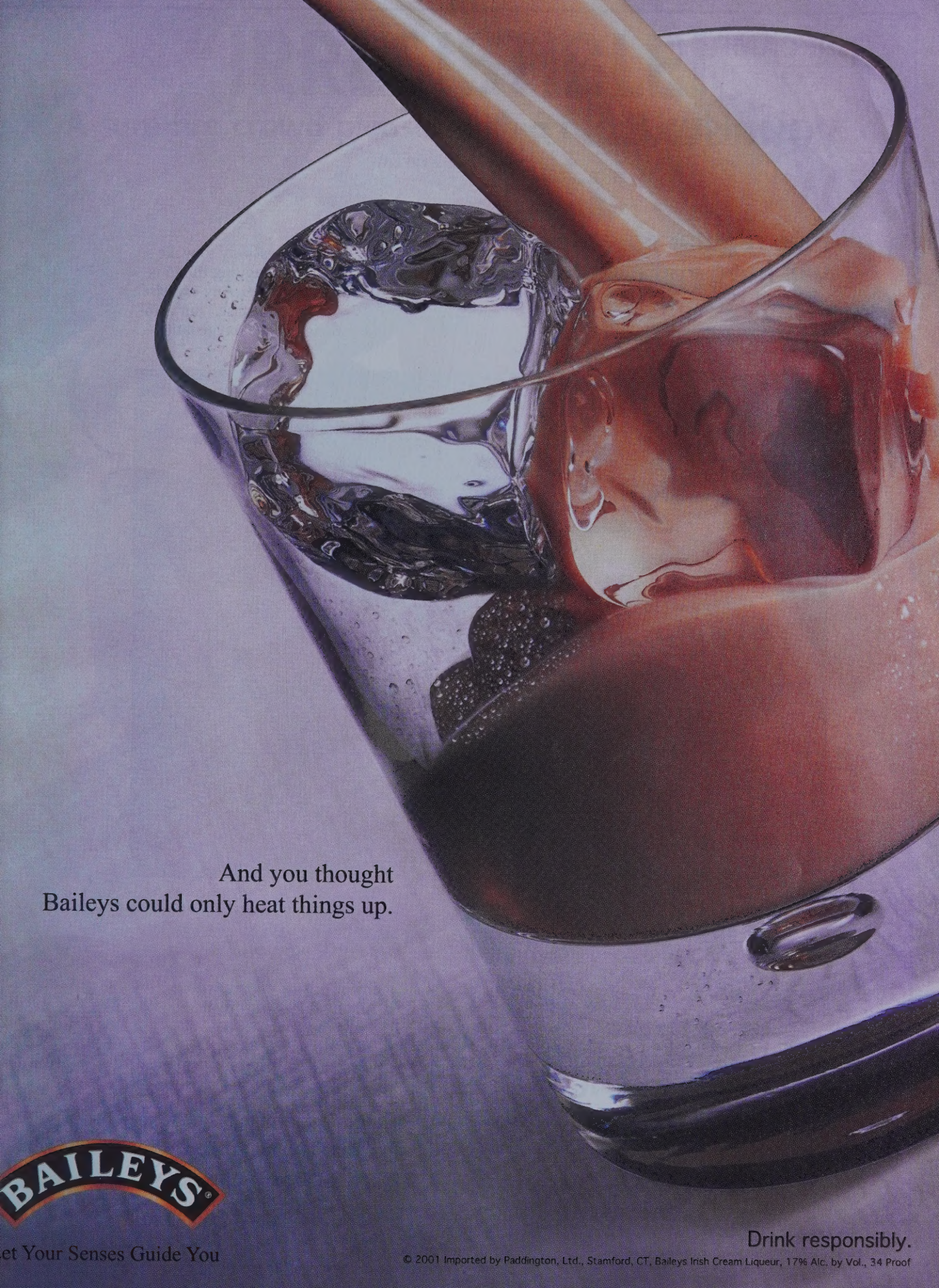
"It was the unseen hands and many voices of the ancestors that taught me."

In 1987, 12 years after migrating to Toronto, Canada, Trinidadian-born Khali Kwodwo Keyi entered York University as an undergraduate student carrying the very first bag that he had ever made. And in doing so, carried the formula that was to be his transformation. Khali soon began producing work for his friends, and nudged by their encouragement, he displayed his high-quality leather arts. His popularity as a fine artist lead to the birth of Keyi Ko Afrikan Arts.

Keyi Ko Afrikan Arts, from its inception in 1990, is dedicated to the preservation of the tradition of working with leather as well as working leather, particularly in the form of "wearable art" such as hats, bags, neck-pouches, earrings and sandals.

"Here the approach, while being of a spiritual nature, recognizes the uniqueness of those for whom the work is created."

For Brother Khali, the work is a true spiritual journey. "This work is bigger than I am, therefore it is not about me. The art is the vehicle and the work begins where the vehicle takes me. I am forever blessed to have been chosen to receive the gift of working with leather. It was the unseen hands and many voices of the Ancestors that taught me the craft."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your sexual workout

Five regular moves will have you rated Best in Bed!

Shanti B. Rangwani, M.B.B.S

The best way to wake up a sagging libido is exercise. Any exercise is "sexercise," but aerobic exercise causes oxygenation and regularly carried out, it increases the oxygen carrying capacity of your blood and thereby improves your body's efficiency in converting sugar to energy. And more energy will get you more "sugar."

In a study of 8,000 women conducted by psychologist Linda De Villers, 83 percent of those polled had engaged in some form of aerobic activity at least three times a week for a minimum of three months; of those, 25 percent reported sexual desire increased considerably after workouts.

1 The Trunk Rock

Face your partner in a sitting position, with your legs spread, and the soles of your feet touching. Now, grab your partner's hand and bend forward while she bends backwards. Alternate. This seesaw workout strengthens the back muscles and tightens the vaginal muscle.

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Photo: Joan Marcus

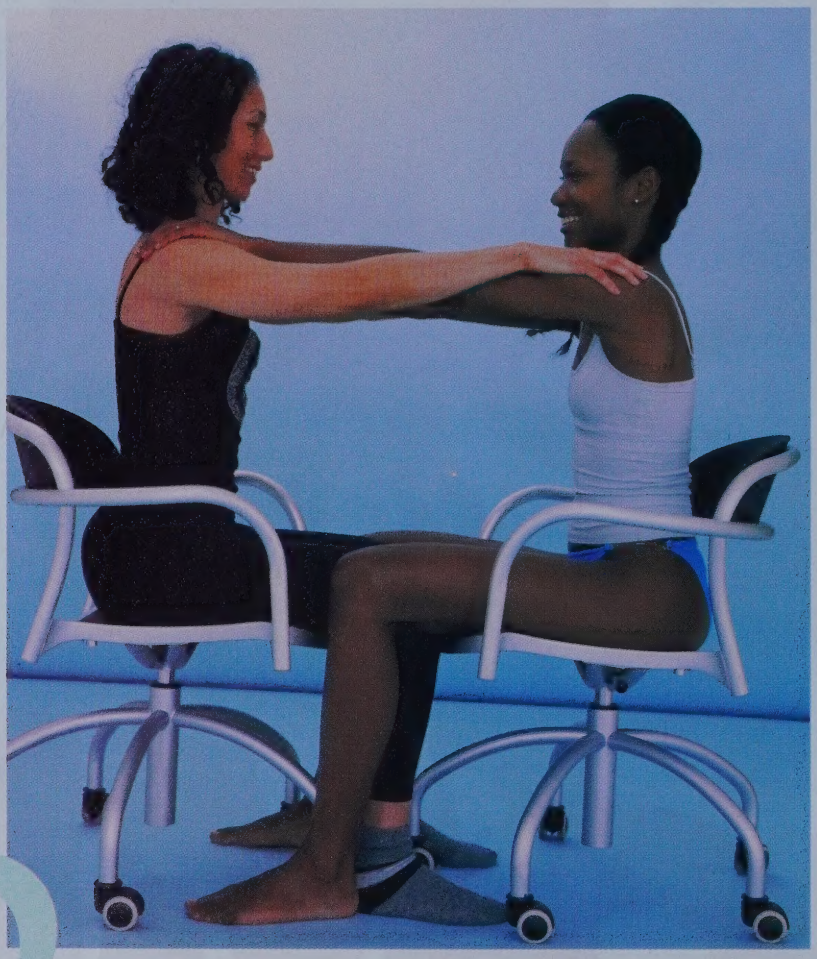
YOUR SEXUAL WORKOUT

Similar research conducted at the UCSD showed an increase in sexual frequency, and more satisfying foreplay, fantasies and orgasms. Not only do people who exercise have more stamina, but they also have higher testosterone levels, which stimulate parts of the brain in both men and women that are associated with sexual arousal.

Exercise may also boost sexual desire by warding off the blues, for in general, depressed people aren't very interested in sex. The mood-elevating beta endorphins released after just 10 minutes of working up a sweat are often credited for the leap in sexual desire and heightened arousal. The harder you push yourself, the longer this positive rush lasts.

Physical fitness is something you owe not just to yourself but also to your partner. Your ability to enjoy love in all its subtleties requires flexibility, excellent muscle tone, the right body weight and sexual stamina, which in most cases translates to a combination of physical stamina and apt mind control.

Enjoy these basic non-strenuous exercises that will help you achieve the minimum fitness you need to perform well in bed. Be as flexible as you wish when using these exercises. Remember, these exercises are guidelines, so feel free to explore and innovate.



2

Thigh Strengthening.
Place two chairs face to face with you and your partner sitting. Hold onto her shoulders and clasp her knees from the outside with yours. Now have her try to separate her legs while you try to bring them together. Reverse after a count of six.

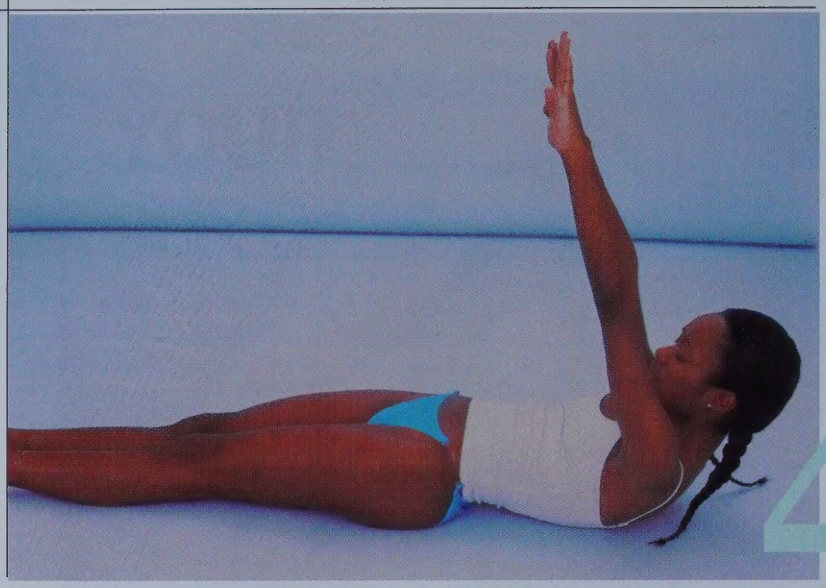
3

The Hula

With your hands clasped behind your head, rotate the hips clockwise and then anti-clockwise. You can perform this exercise lying on the bed, raising only your buttocks. This strengthens your lower back muscles and trains you to mesmerize your woman with the grace of a belly dancer. It also improves the rotatory movement that can make being on top such fun.

images by Jeff Gamble

THE CAMP



4

Lie on your back and raise your arms. Then attempt to raise your upper body as far as it will go.

queer as folk

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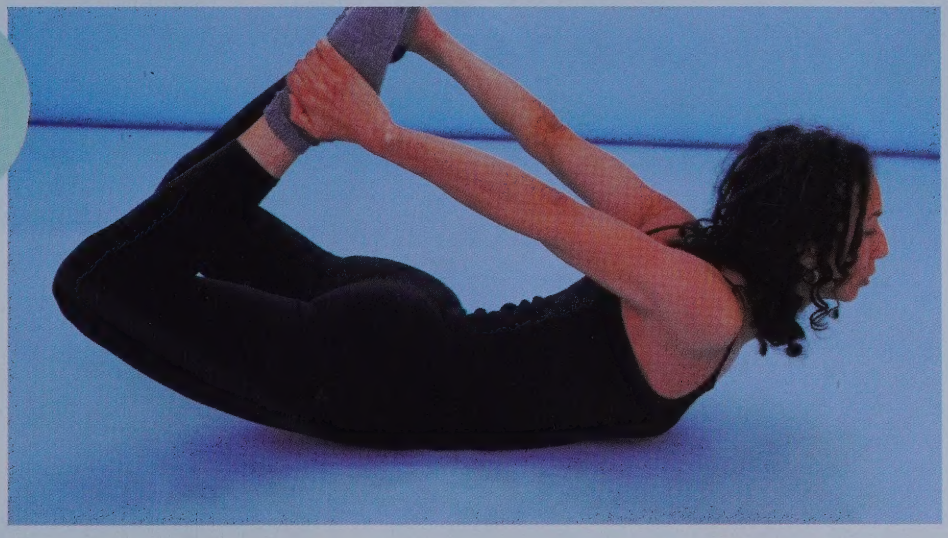
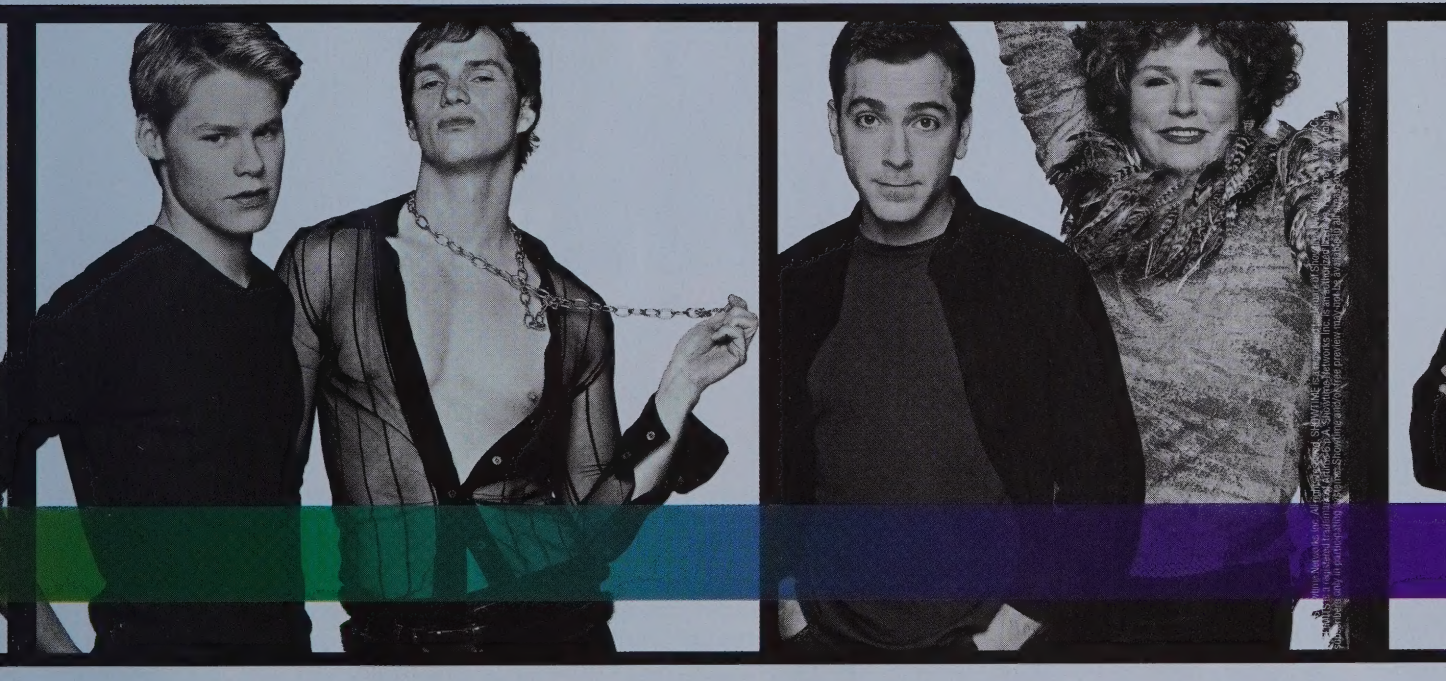
5

Lie face down and arch your body backwards, gripping your ankles with your hands. your body should take the shape of a bow that is being arched.





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Photography by Debra St. John

1. Duane Cramer, Billy Curtis, Lance Evans 2. Ave Montague (l) and Cathy Adams 3. John Derek 4. Angela Biondo and Theresa Brown 5. L Continuum (l) and Touri Monroe, Miss Gay Oakland 2001.

Festive Feature

San Francisco Black Lesbian and Gay Film Festival Draws Talent

The Black Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (BLGBT) Film Festival presented an inspiring selection of films last November at the Brava Theater Center in San Francisco. Truly a groundbreaking event, this is the first festival of its kind anywhere in the world. For three days, the festival celebrated the diversity of the Black LGBT community with 32 films and videos from the United States, Africa, Canada, Brazil and Cuba. Six of the presenting filmmakers were from the Bay Area. Sponsored by the Black Coalition on AIDS, Man2Man program, the festival's mission is to present film as an educational tool toward understanding Black multi-sexual culture.

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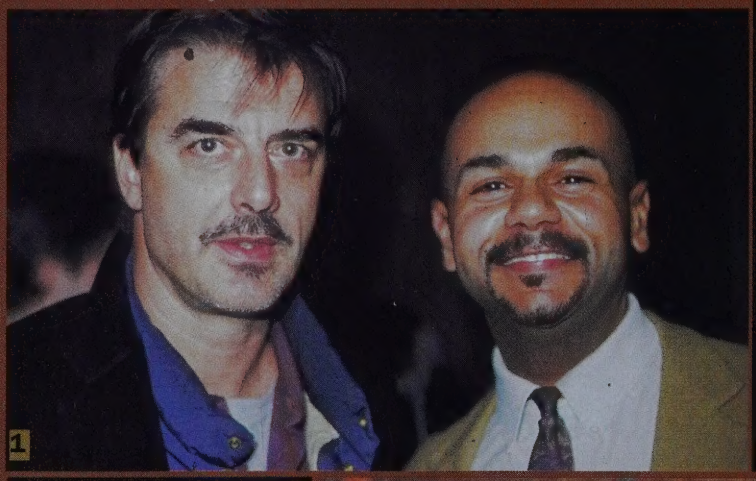
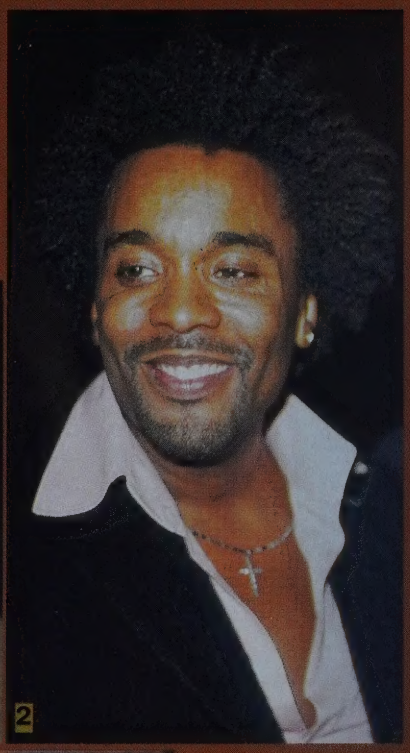
Monsters Ball

Gay Men of African Descent, GMAD receives proceeds from pre-screening of Halle Berry film in New York.





1. Actor, Chris Noth, with Earl Plante, GMAD Development Director. 2. Film producer, Lee Daniels keeps it real by inviting GMAD. 3. Tony Bennet in the house 4. Star Jones with Bill Peters, Executive Director of GMAD.

Photography by Stuart Van de Zee

welcome black folx!

Front Row, Kneeling (Left to Right): Rommell Bennett, Alonzo Reese, Shari McKoy, Cheri Toney (Center, Board Member), Johnnie Pratt (Center, Outreach Coordinator), Back Row, Standing (Left to Right): Donald Tarver, Carmen Morrison, Eddie Dobbins (Co-chair, LGADDA), Duane Cramer (Center, Board Member), Ernest Hopkins (Director of Federal Affairs, San Francisco AIDS Foundation), Charles Huff, Ken McNeely (Center, Board Member)

A warm sign stating, "Welcome Black Folks" greeted African Americans and People of African Descent to a historic meeting at the new LGBT Community Center on Wednesday, January 30, 2002. Nearly 70 Black LGBT board members, executive directors, program mangers, outreach workers, political activists, teens, elders and those merely curious gathered from throughout the Bay Area to meet with board members and staff.

continued on page 46

DUKE ELLINGTON'S
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The13th Annual Bayard Rustin Breakfast will be held at Boston's John F. Kennedy Library on April 27th and will focus on the often-neglected gay Civil Rights hero's views of social change and justice for the oppressed people. The impact of AIDS on the lives of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people of color will be discussed, as well as bridging the gap between gay men and lesbians. Cambridge city councilor E. Denise Simmons will serve as keynote speaker. For more information, email BRBreakfast@aol.com or call 617/450-1644.

millenium sistah

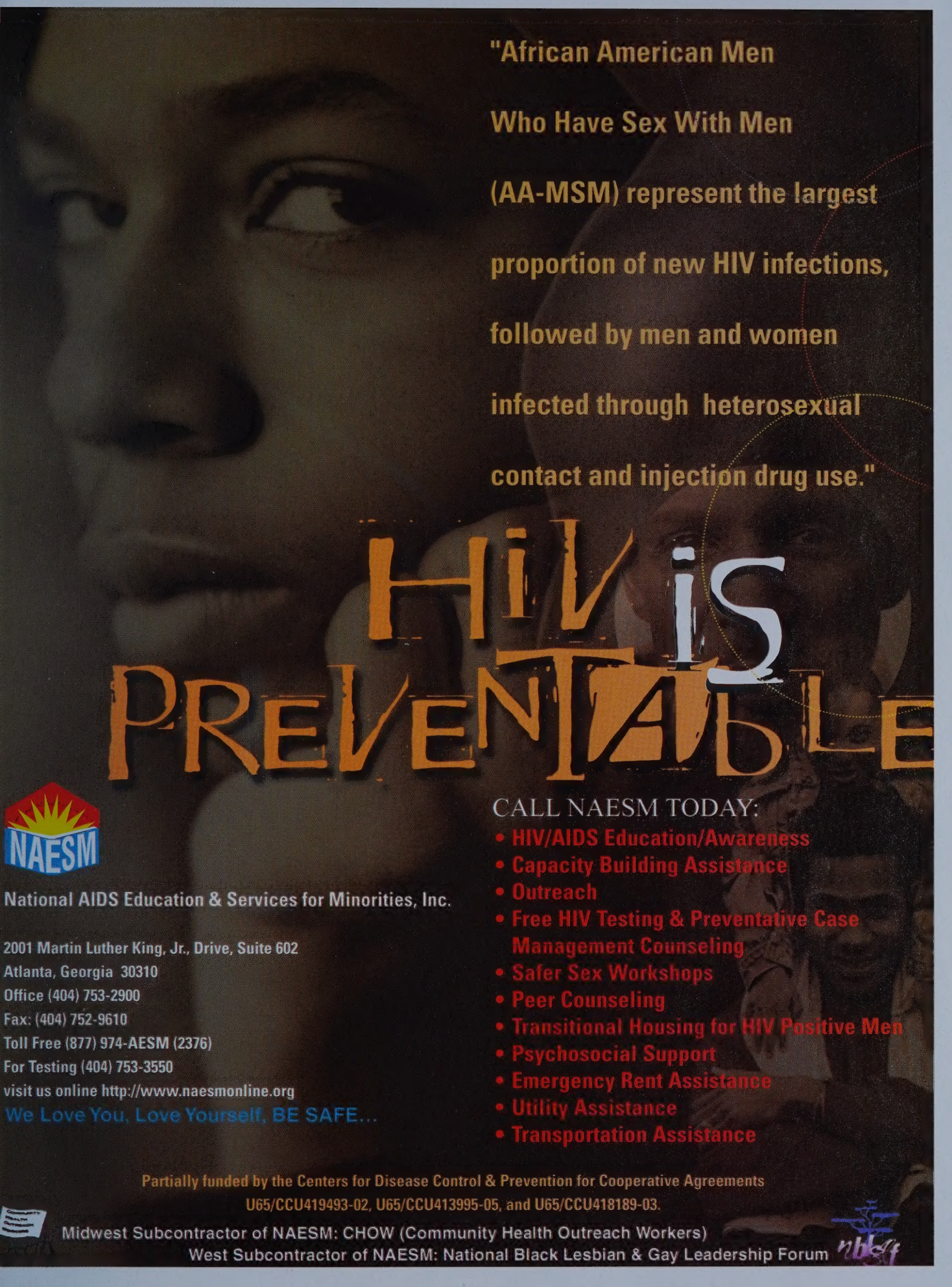
A Remedy for the Soul: Sunny Punta Cana Island, the Site of the First Millennium Sistahs' Retreat

In these times, retreats offer a renewal of the mind, body and soul. That's why Millennium Sistahs Inc., a New York based non-profit human service agency offering a variety of services for women and their families, is inviting women to experience a retreat on Punta Cana Island. Workshops will include discussions about relationships and HIV/AIDS prevention. Then enjoy refreshing activities including yoga, aerobics or relaxing massages. As president, Glenda White, says "Since September 11, we [women] need each other more now for support." For information, contact Millennium Sistahs, at 516/538-3887.

Welcome Black Folx!
continued from page 44

They discussed the purpose, vision and opportunities for people of African Descent. "As a Community Center board member, I offered the invitation and was overwhelmed by the response of the Black community. Its good to see that people care about the issues concerning our community and how The Center can help meet the goals and needs of LGBT people of African Descent," said Duane Cramer.

Representatives of The Center presented an overview of available space and services to be provided. Lesbians & Gays of African Descent for Democratic Action (LGADDA) and the Black Coalition on AIDS (BCA) are two of the 23 groups to occupy office space. The San Franscico Center, 1800 Market Street.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infected through heterosexual
contact and injection drug use."
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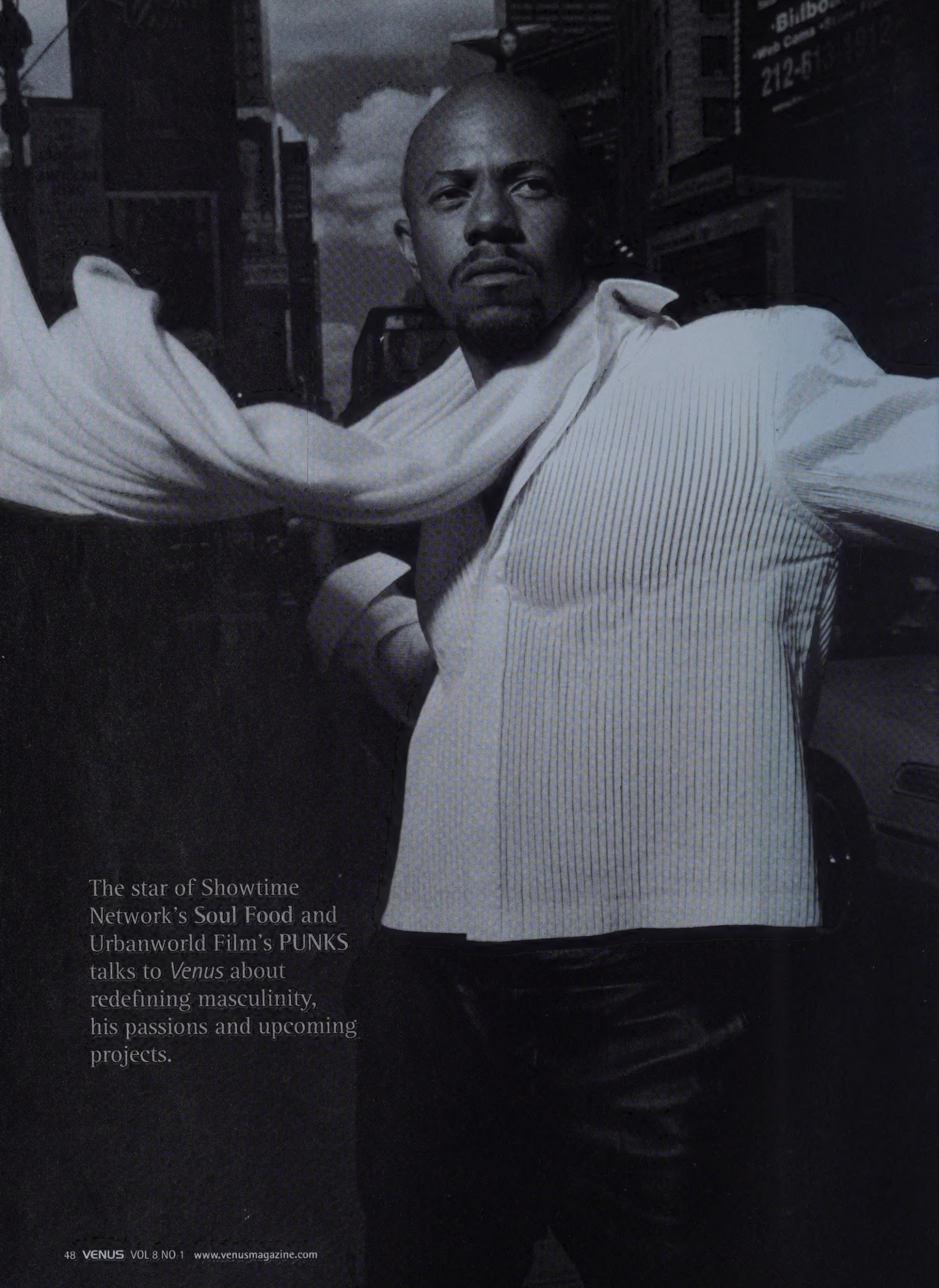
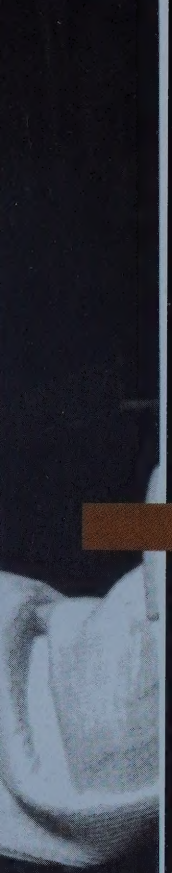


The star of Showtime Network's Soul Food and Urbanworld Film's PUNKS talks to *Venus* about redefining masculinity, his passions and upcoming projects.



The ROCK

Rockmond Dunbar is without a doubt, The Sexiest Man on Television, (and we've got proof).

words by Donia Elizabeth Allen

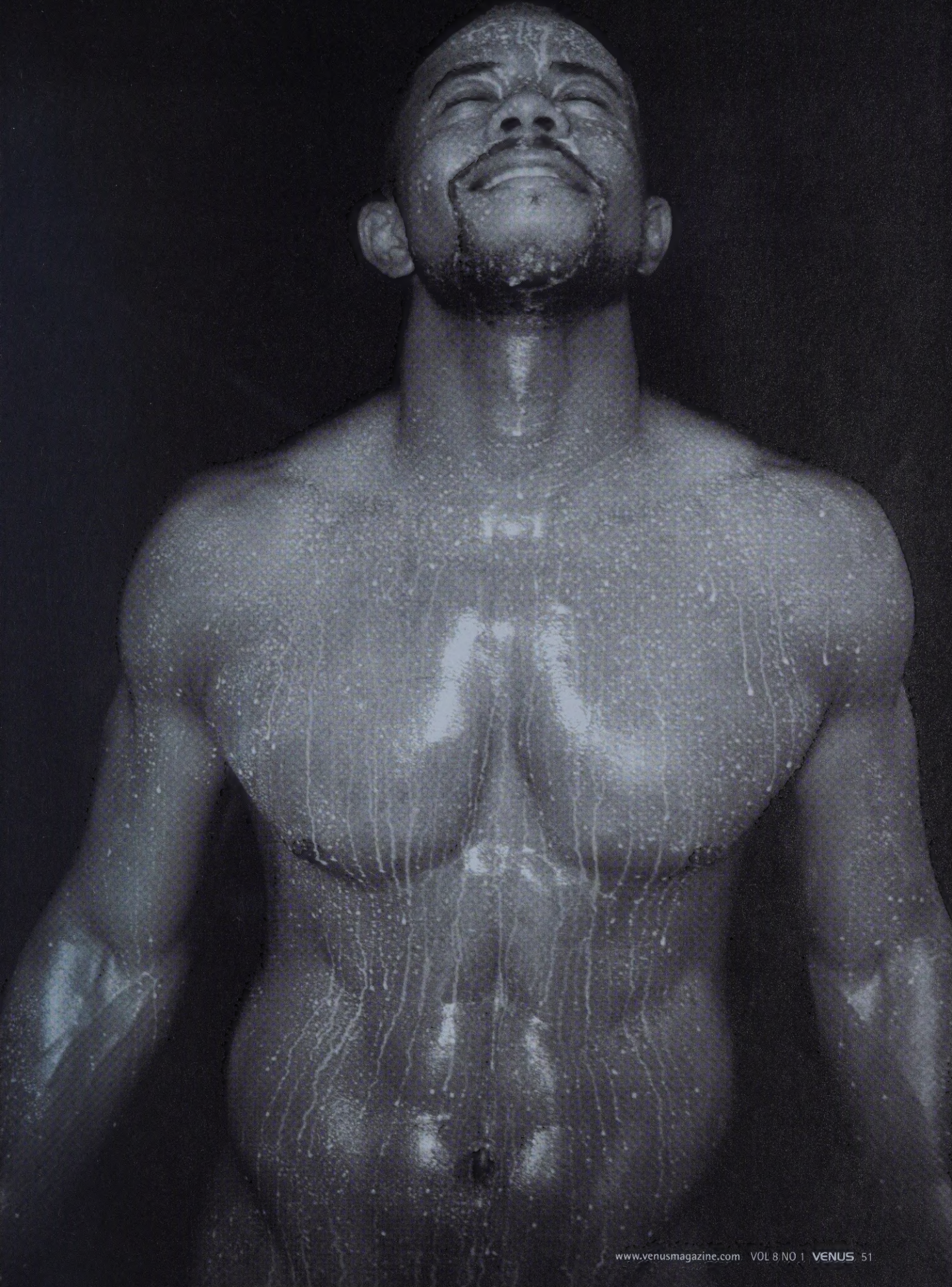
is last name harkens back to the old-school elegance of Renaissance/race man Paul Lawrence Dunbar. His first name conjures up any number of images (rock star, rock-hard, Rock Hudson), but certainly it suggests the edgier, more contemporary presence we've seen on Showtime's hit series *Soul Food*, in which Dunbar plays Kenny, and in *PUNKS*, in which Dunbar plays Darby, a musician who moves into a gay neighborhood in Los Angeles. When we meet in New York on a frigid day in December, I discover that this actor is all that his name implies, and more: bold, multi-talented and a sex symbol in both the gay and straight communities. Rockmond Dunbar is, without question, a man who's got a whole lot going on.

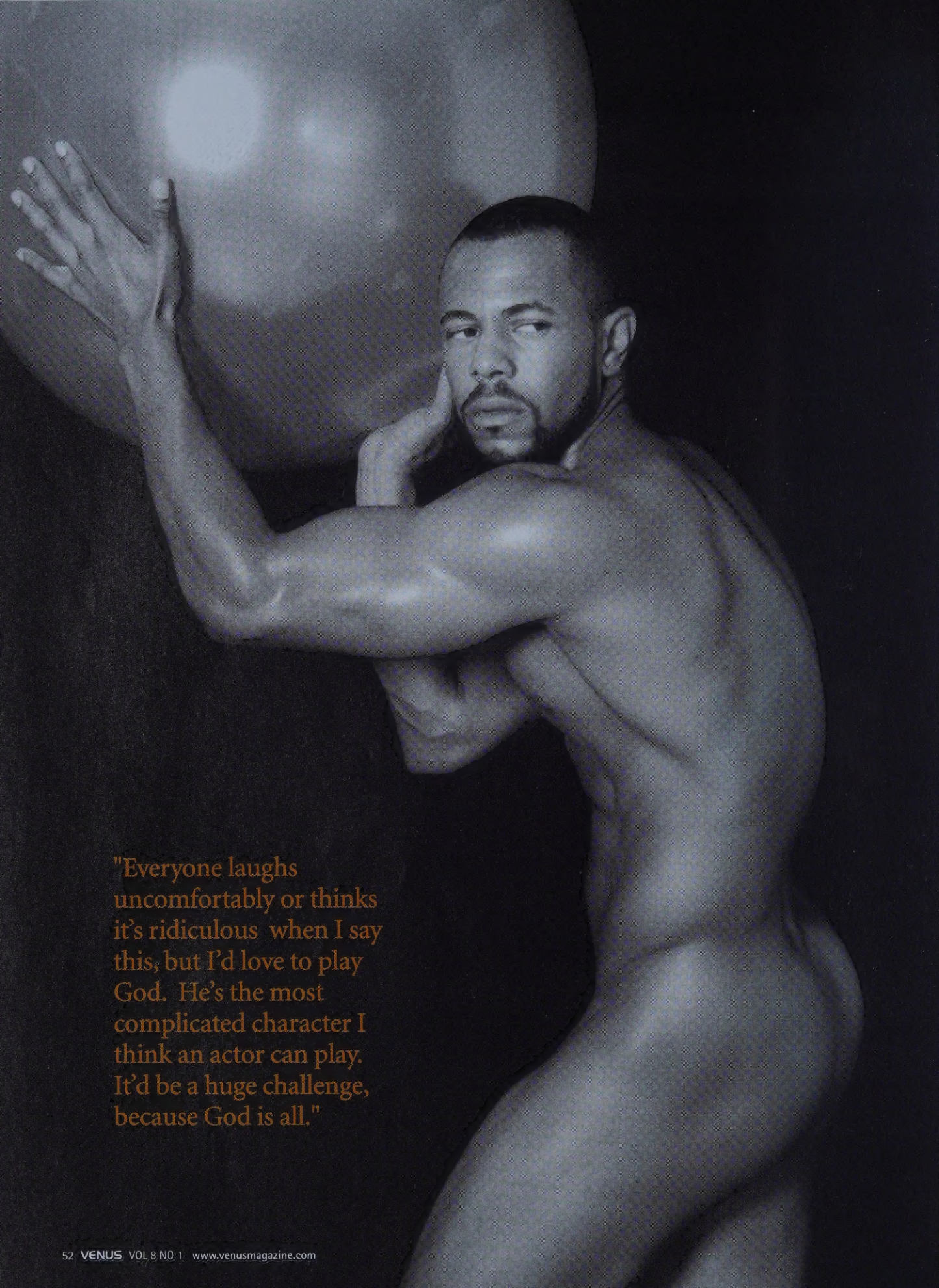
The son of an RN and a father who "has many jobs and hobbies," Dunbar was raised in Oakland, Calif. It was there, in high school, that he first remembers getting interested in acting. "I had the chance to take yet another gym class, or try something else. I decided I was tired of gym and took a drama class instead. That season there were a couple of productions going up. One was on Langston Hughes. I played like five roles." He laughs. "I remember changing costumes like crazy."

In spite of feeling the magic of being on stage, Dunbar went on to Morehouse College, a historically black college in Atlanta, with the dream of becoming a lawyer. One day, while bragging about a play he was in and how many "cats" he beat out to get the role, a friend asked him what turned out to be a critical question: Was it acting like a lawyer or was it the lawyering itself that Dunbar liked? Dunbar recalls this moment with a look of wonder on his face. "It was a question that made me change my major," he says. "I realized then that it really wasn't the career of a lawyer I wanted, it was the fantasy of the career, and the portrayal of it, the performance."

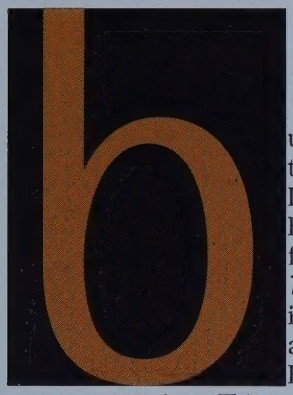
The rest is, well, history. Dunbar called his mother and told her he was changing his major to drama and that he wanted to be an actor, not a lawyer or corporate executive. She expressed surprise, but then he asked her what she thought the first time she ever saw him on stage. Without hesitation, she responded that she thought her son was exactly where he should be. Neither Hollywood, nor Dunbar's fans, could agree more.

Since then, in addition to his regular role on *Soul Food*, Dunbar's been a guest star on *Felicity*, *G. vs. E.*, *Two Guys, a Girl and a Pizza Place*, *The Practice*, *The Pretender* and Spielberg's *Earth 2*. In addition, Dunbar has performed lead roles in an impressive list of independent features, among them the critically acclaimed *PUNKS*, *Sick Puppies*, *Love the Way*, *Misery Loves Company* and *Whodunit*. And this doesn't include his numerous stage productions. Dunbar has performed in several around the country. When I ask what his dream role is, Dunbar is quick to respond: "Everyone laughs uncomfortably or thinks it's ridiculous when I say this, but I'd love to play God. He's the most complicated character I think an actor can play. It'd be a huge challenge, because God is all." He also expressed interest in playing Arthur Ashe, the great African-American tennis player and role model who died of AIDS in 1993.





"Everyone laughs uncomfortably or thinks it's ridiculous when I say this, but I'd love to play God. He's the most complicated character I think an actor can play. It'd be a huge challenge, because God is all."



ut acting is merely one of the very hot irons Dunbar's got in the fire. He plans to co-direct his first feature film, entitled *The Voices of Claire's Heart* in the near future. He's also working with E. Lynn Harris to develop a project. This would appear to be a match made in heaven.

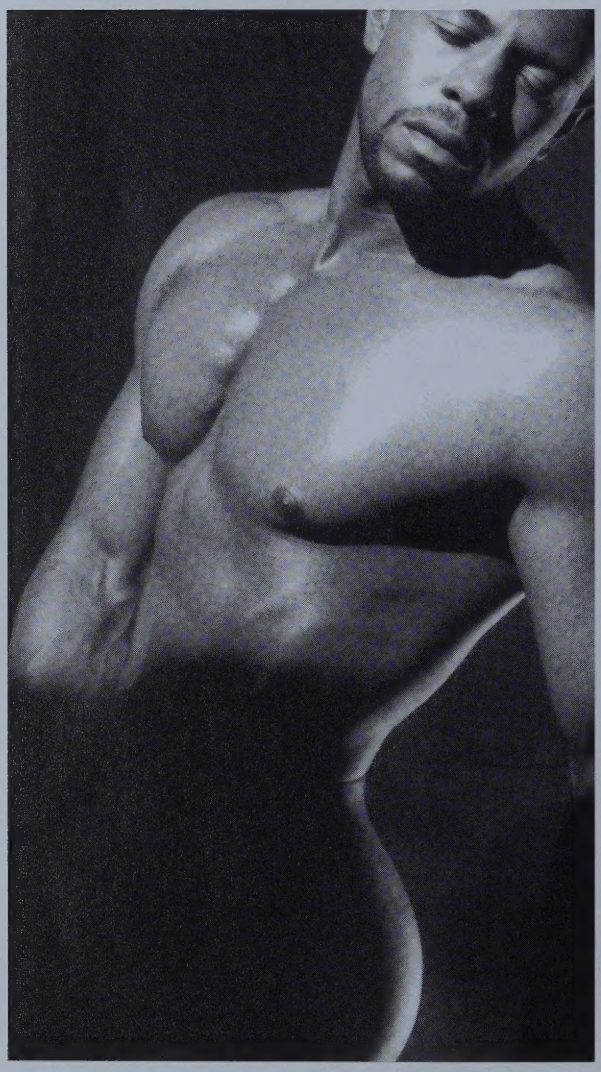
With a slew of novels, *Just As I Am* and *If This World Were Mine* among them, in which young, attractive, gay, straight and bisexual African-American men and women struggle to make it both personally and professionally, Harris has made a fortune appealing to both gay and straight, white and African-American readers. Like Harris, Dunbar, with his laid-back, everyman appeal (and, let's admit it, his chiseled physique) and his willingness to portray both gay and straight characters, has appealed to a similarly diverse audience. Clearly both Harris and Dunbar are, among other things, shrewd businessmen.

Reaching this relatively untapped audience with their projects will undoubtedly continue to put both author and actor on the cutting edge creatively, and be extremely lucrative to boot.

As if being an actor-director and collaborating with famous writers isn't enough, when I visit Dunbar's Web site (www.rockmonddunbar.com), I discover that he's an accomplished visual artist as well. With titles like "Mindseye," "Relationship's Nightmare," and "Baby's Beat," his paintings are haunting, and suggest that life is far from simple for this ambitious 28-year-old. When I compliment his work, Dunbar is modest.

"Painting is really like therapy," he says. "It's another way for me to express myself."

Of all the things he's got going on these days, though, Dunbar's calendar and his new clothing line are the two projects he expresses the most enthusiasm about. The 13-month calendar features photographs of Dunbar (and yes, he's scantily clad) by Michael Chambers, and Dunbar's own poetry. While he didn't want to give too much away about his new clothing line (called Rabnud, Dunbar's name spelled backward and with a silent "n"), Dunbar feels he and his designer have created a look that will appeal to both men and women.

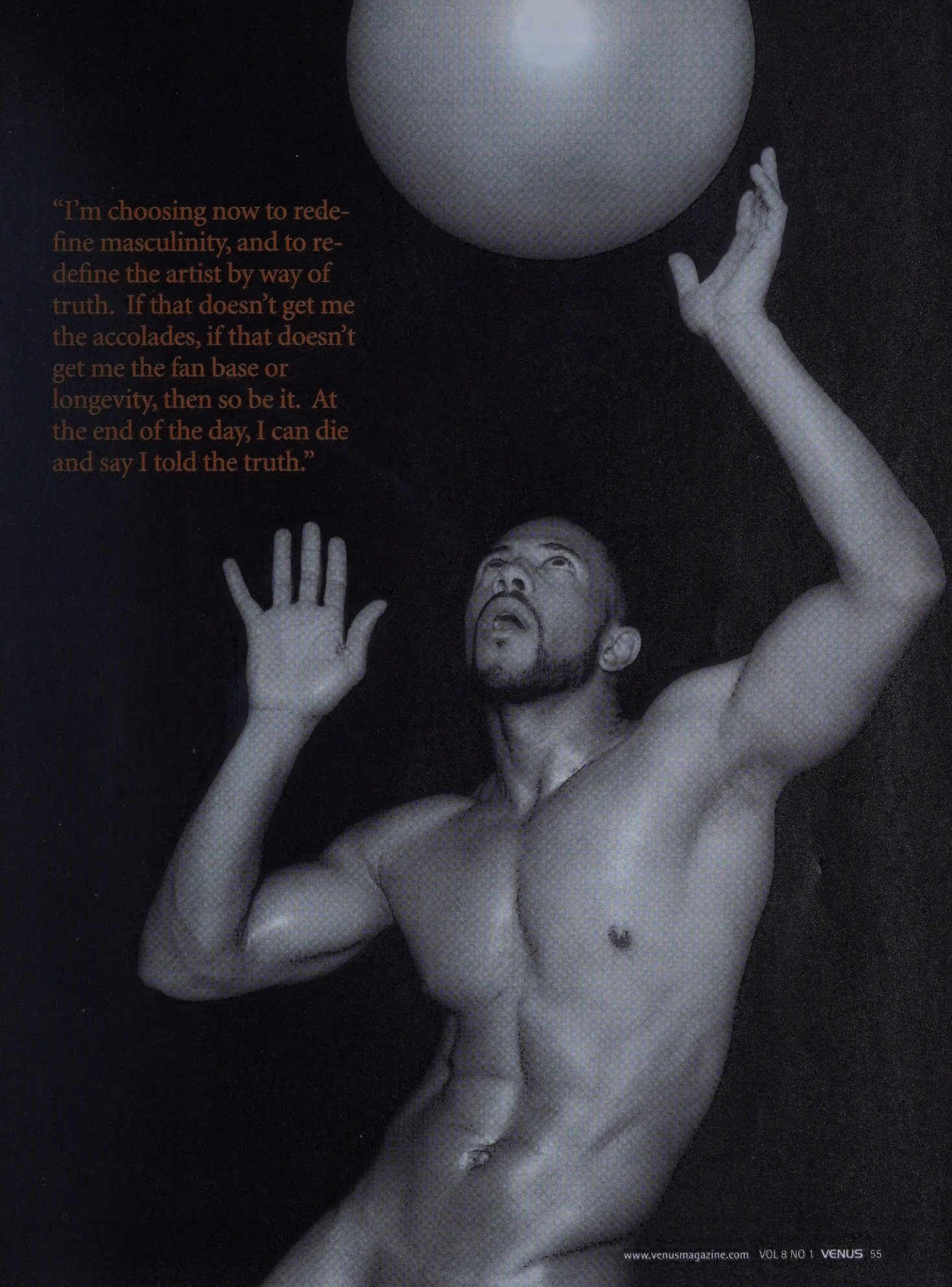


So how does Mr. Man in the mix hold it all together? Dunbar's commitment to working on himself certainly helps. When I ask about favorite authors, he offers a surprisingly honest answer: "Lately I've been reading psychology books, you know, self-help books. I'm trying to be a better person, a better lover, a better friend, a better boyfriend, a better son. I'm redefining Rockmond." He also has a larger agenda: "I'm choosing now to redefine masculinity, and to redefine the artist by way of truth. If that doesn't get me the accolades, if that doesn't get me the fan base or longevity, then so be it. At the end of the day, I can die and say I told the truth."

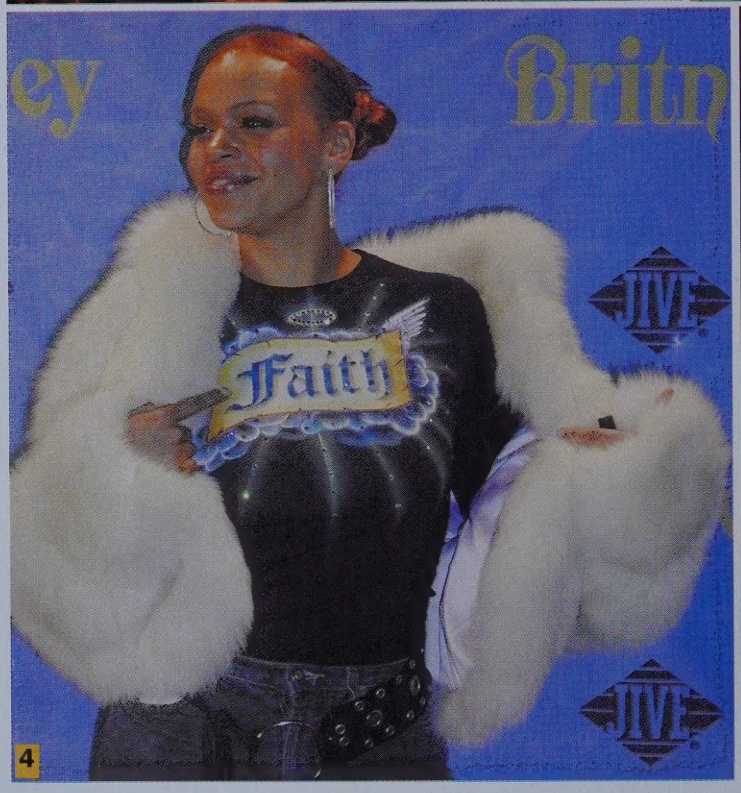
Self-discovery's all well and good, but to many, Dunbar's an enigmatic sex symbol, one folks want the low-down on, specifically where his sex life is concerned. Is he gay? Straight? Bi? Dunbar is straight, but judging from his ear-to-ear grin, he's got no problem being a gay icon: "This reporter told me after *PUNKS* was released that I was a gay icon. I absolutely love it. No complaints. I love that people appreciate my work. I love to be loved."

Bottom line? Dunbar's deeply committed to acting, and he's interested in taking on challenging roles regardless of the character's gender preference, and regardless of how people view him: "I don't ever feel like I have to prove myself. I don't have to wear an "I'm not gay" or "I'm gay" or "I'm bisexual" or "I'm not bisexual" T-shirt. He pauses a minute, then adds this: "The funniest thing is, that even if I answer the question, people don't believe it anyway, so it really doesn't matter."

What does matter is this: Dunbar's a multi-talented man who's working all he's got to the hilt, and it's just the beginning for this introspective rising star.



"I'm choosing now to redefine masculinity, and to redefine the artist by way of truth. If that doesn't get me the accolades, if that doesn't get me the fan base or longevity, then so be it. At the end of the day, I can die and say I told the truth."



Photography by Tina Paul
1. Blu Cantrell, 2. Chaka Khan and 3. Mya deliver those miraculous smiles at WKTU's Miracle on 34th Street holiday concert, Madison Square Garden 4. Faith Evans representing at Britney Spear's Album party.

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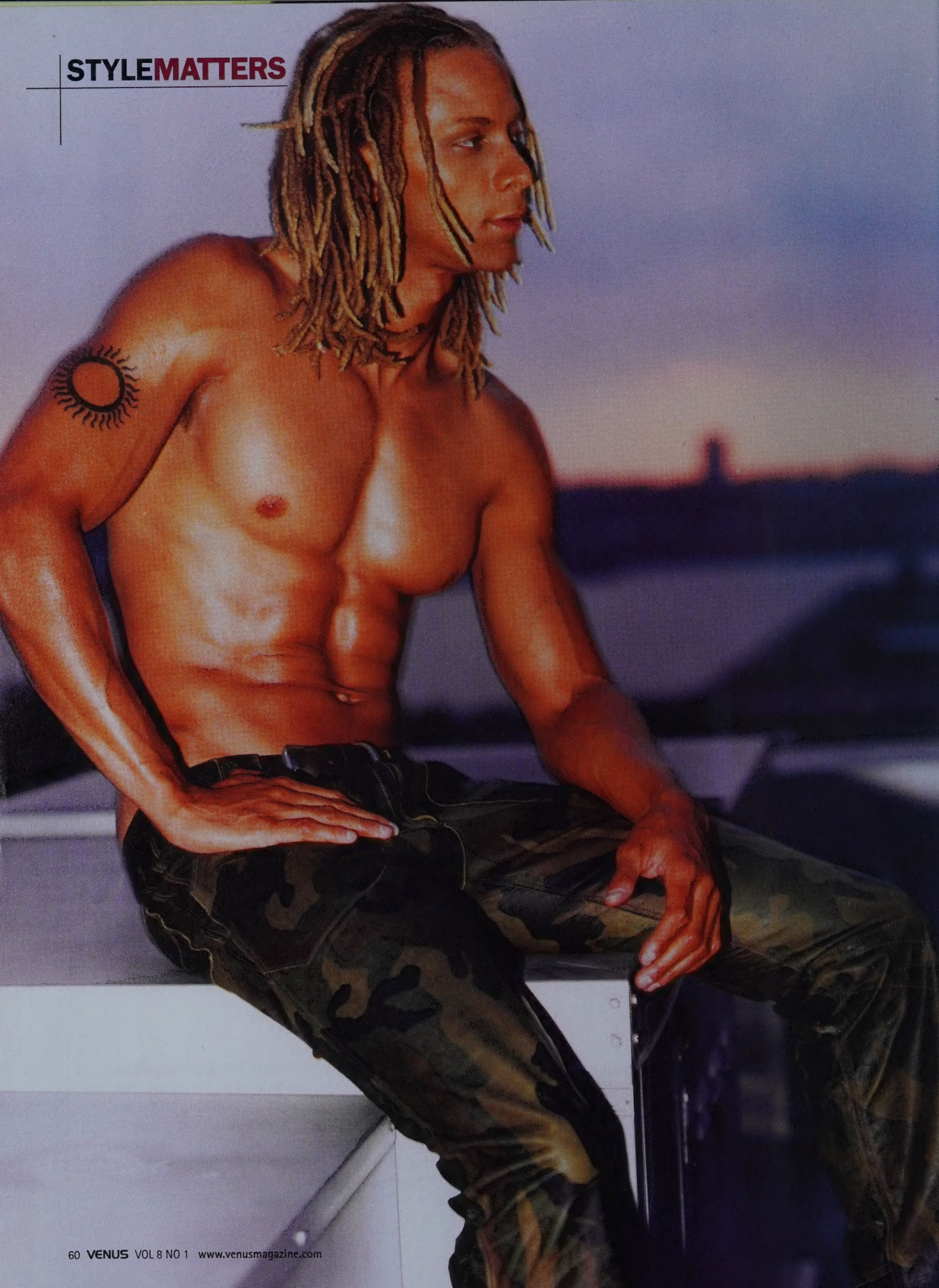
SKIN IS IN

words by Prince-Leon Kusi
images by Stanley Debas

Luscious, Luxurious Leather

Fashion Notes from the Diary of a Prince

The latest shapes by Anton at Siren on St. Mark's Place in New York were intoxicating, what with the laid-back format, the up-close-and-personal gorgeous models and the house music spinning all night. For a moment, I nearly forgot that I was working and had to be reminded to put pen to paper. You'll note that your Stylephile reporter is only a modest drinker, so it wasn't inebriation that I was feeling. No, no, this joy had everything to do with skin. When I received the invitation, I couldn't wait to get my happy self over to the club to see what new creations he had in store. Having dressed countless celebs, Anton has long been recognized as the master of leatherwear, and on this night, I got just a peek at his visionary brilliance.



and assorted alt-models. But where is the show, I wondered. Little did I know that this was the show. In a move characteristic of so many young talents, Anton had thumbed his nose at "traditional" shows and opted to give we, the people, a chance to experience the clothes, to get close enough to see the seams, and if you were lucky, you might just end up in a fashion spread. Sadly I was not so fortunate. But no matter, I was there for the garments!

There is no word in either my first, second or third language to describe the level of genius that this man possesses. Between Midori Sours, I glimpsed an array of earth-tone pants that hugged in all the right places. Essentially, birthday suit replicas, these were much more beautiful and sexy than any I've ever seen. Working in a myriad of skins ranging from ostrich to alligator and deer, he outfitted his multi-colored mannequins in iridescent halter tops with long wrap skirts and perfectly tailored suede demi-jackets were paired with mustard-tone Python pants. On my way to the bar, I passed a millennium warrior in a vest of red gator-skin armor. Never before has leather been so versatile, so stunningly beautiful. And the fact that each piece is reversible exponentially increases its beauty.

This is most certainly not your father's leather, nor is this road-ready Harley-inspired leather. Through some magical alchemy, Anton has honed the ability to make leather anything he wants it to be. On a whim it can be hard and rugged, then soft and supple, then feminine and flirty, then pure Rock 'n' Roll.

nly Anton could make leather ensembles suitable to be worn to

work, or the beach. Yes, he does swimwear! The irony of his all-couture clothes is that, much like their maker, they manage to be badass without being pretentious. There's no need to boast when you're the best.

Not merely a designer, Anton is an artisan, a craftsman par excellence. His "Predator and Prey" pants, made of alligator and deerskins, are representative of his superior craftsmanship. He creates animal skin mosaics that accentuate the human form. Whether it be a pair of men's pants or a woman's jacket, each article is meticulously crafted with enormous care. His cuts are unparalleled, his talents undeniable and his ascent into the fashion stratosphere inevitable.

Having seen the artistry up close, I know he's sure to have a backlog of orders. I'm going to place mine fast and once again join the partygoers feigning obliviousness to the fabulosity of their clothes and mocking the sorry souls who buy off the rack.

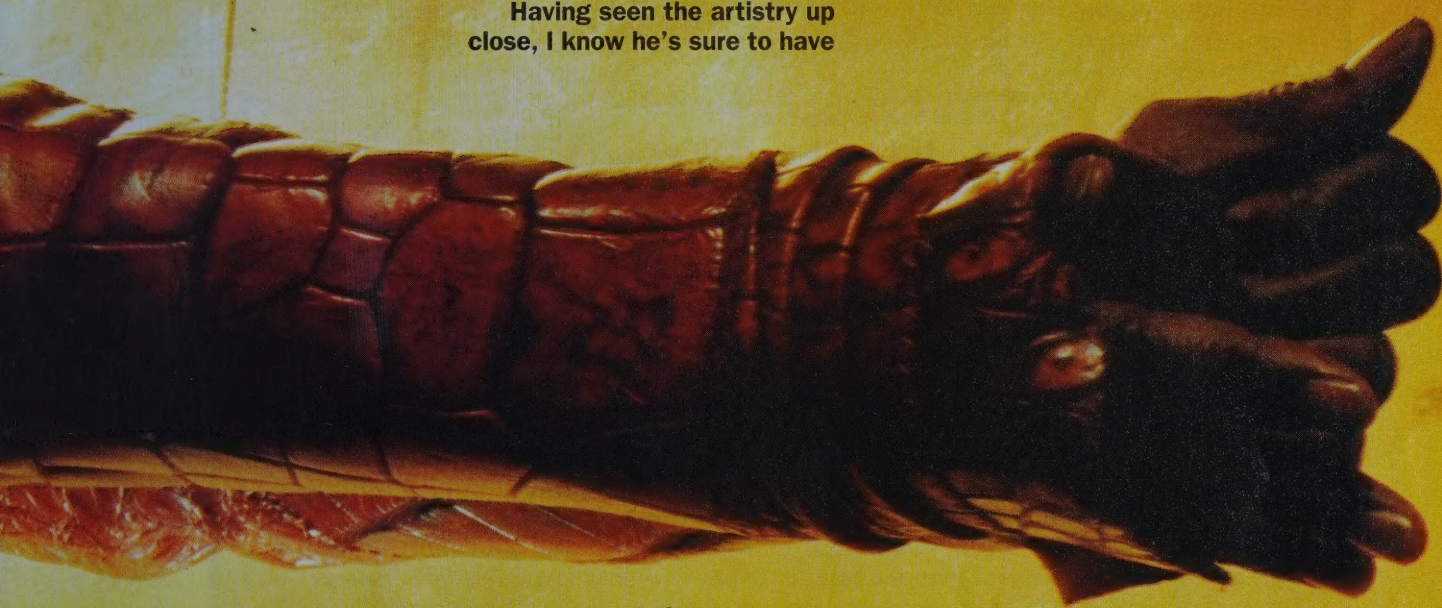
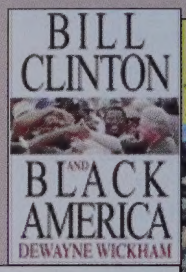
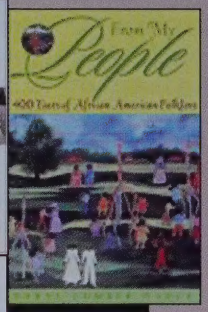


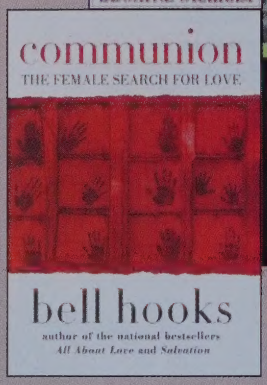
image by Milea
styling by Christian Ruart
for RC Productions.

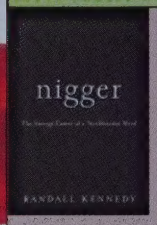
If you are looking for perfect ways to show your love, whether it's a love for your people, a beloved or a just a good read, here's a list that offers extraordinary ways.
Retha Powers is an Executive Editor of the Quality Paperback Book Club.

bell hooks challenges women's understanding of love in **Communion: The Female Search for Love.** hooks argues that contrary to images on TV, film and literature which are based on a patriarchal ideology, true love can only be found through love of oneself first. From here the search for true intimacy can begin. A chapter on lesbian relationships explores that challenges women loving women face.









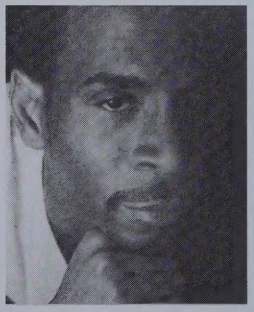
At over 700 pages, **For My People: 400 Years of African American Folklore** is an amazing collection of the ways we pass down our story from generation to generation. From speeches by Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth and Malcolm X to blues song lyrics of Ma Rainey and B.B. King to poetry and the humor of emails like "You Know You Went to a Black College If.." Daryl Cumber Dance captures the story of who we were, who we are and who we hope to be in our own words.

We've all heard that love is the other side of hate. No word inspires more extreme and complex feelings in black folks than the word **nigger**. Randall Kennedy looks at the history of this charged word from the first time it appeared in print in relation to a hate crime, to attempts to deactivate it's painful impact by today's rappers and other performers, and white folks who are sued for use present day.

Black Gay Man by Robert Reid-Pharr takes a look at what this complex identity through the lens of the personal, historical, the academic and the erotic. Topics such as The Million Man March, the black family gay male identity and lesbianism are a few of the topics Reid-Pharr lays bare in this important book.

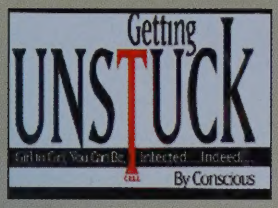
Dark Midnight When I Rise: The Story of the Fisk Jubilee Singers tells the story of the singing group that was front page news in the 1870s. Dark Midnight tells the story of the singers success in spite of resistance from the dominant culture and also offers a complete portrait of the African-American struggle for education and an intellectual life under the most dire of circumstances.

Through step-by-step instructions and illustrations, **The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Dating and Sex** by Joshua Piven, David Borgenicth, Jenifer Worick shows you how to: remove stubborn articles of clothing, slip away from a blind date, how to escape a bad kisser and of survive a meeting with the parents, running into your ex or waking up next to someone whose name you can't remember.



Lyric: Poems Along A Broken Road
by G. Winston James ISBN: 0-9655117-1-5

The paperback release of Lyric: by G. Winston James, Executive Director of Other Countries: Black Gay Expression artists collective in New York, offers a metered and poetic blessing. James was a 1997 Fellow of the Millay Colony for the Arts, which gave him a room of his own to complete many of the works in this collection. He has collaborated with choreographers L.A.E. Beckles, Ronald K. Brown, Tamieca McCloud, Trebien Pollard, and André Tyson to create works fusing dance and the spoken word. His prose and essays are featured in several anthologies including Shade: An Anthology of Short Fiction by Gay Men of African Descent (Avon Books).



Getting Unstuck

by Conscious,
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prettytomboys.com
Poignant, gripping, and cathartic, tale of drugs, crime, sexual abuse, and female-to-female HIV transmission. Life Changing!

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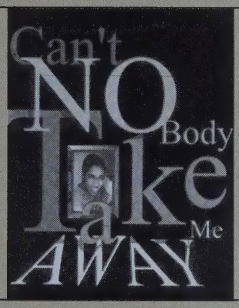
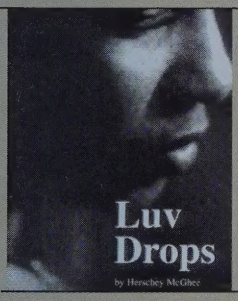


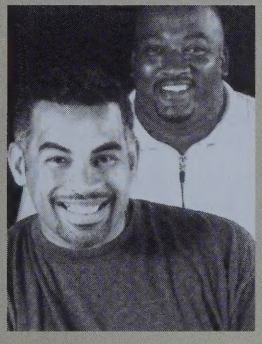


Luv Drops

by Herschey MgGhee
PO Box 20577, Park West Station, New York, NY, 10025
A new collection of poems from multi-award-winner Herschey MgGhee, elicits joy and pain with passionate and humorous prose.

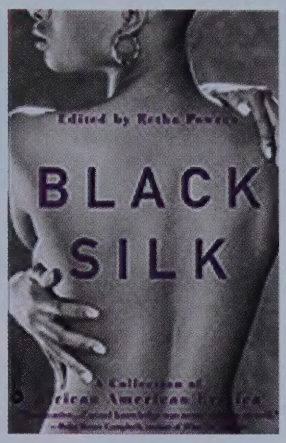
Visiting Langston

by Willie Perdomo and Bryan Collier ISBN:0-8050-6744-2
A unique journey into the immortal poet's world through the eyes of a little girl visiting his Harlem home is the picture book Visiting Langston. Written by cutting-edge poet Willie Perdomo (who grew up near Hughes' Harlem house) and illustrated by Bryan Collier (who won a Coretta Scott-King Award).



BLACK SILK

Edited by
Retha Powers
Warner Books
ISBN:
0446676918



A powerful collection of erotica from today's leading black writers and fresh voices, BLACK SILK explores exciting territory in the realm of the African-American experience. From Eric Jerome Dickey's rueful tale of lust to Lolita Files's scorching account of insatiable adventuring...to Breena Clarke's tribute to the strength of erotic imagination...to Camika Spencer's encounters online and in the flesh...to Carolyn Ferrell's story of intergenerational desire and discovery, this book sings of the power of the forbidden and the transforming-with unforgettable characters who claim their pleasure and seek its ultimate limits. Never before published, never before available, these erotic short stories are a dazzlingly sensual meditation on the very soul of passion. Acclaimed LGBT voices include: Jacqueline Woodson, Bruce Morrow, Janet McDonald, Bil Wright and Elissa Perry.

Body Language

Poems by
CC Carter
Kings Crossing Publishing
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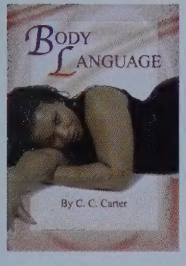
770/592-0673



"A celebration of the physical nature of language, the poems in "Body Language" bend to the heat of C.C.'s voice, wrap themselves into verses, stanzas, songs of desire and self-love that make you want to shout 'yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!' "
-Cin Salach, Art Beat Chicago

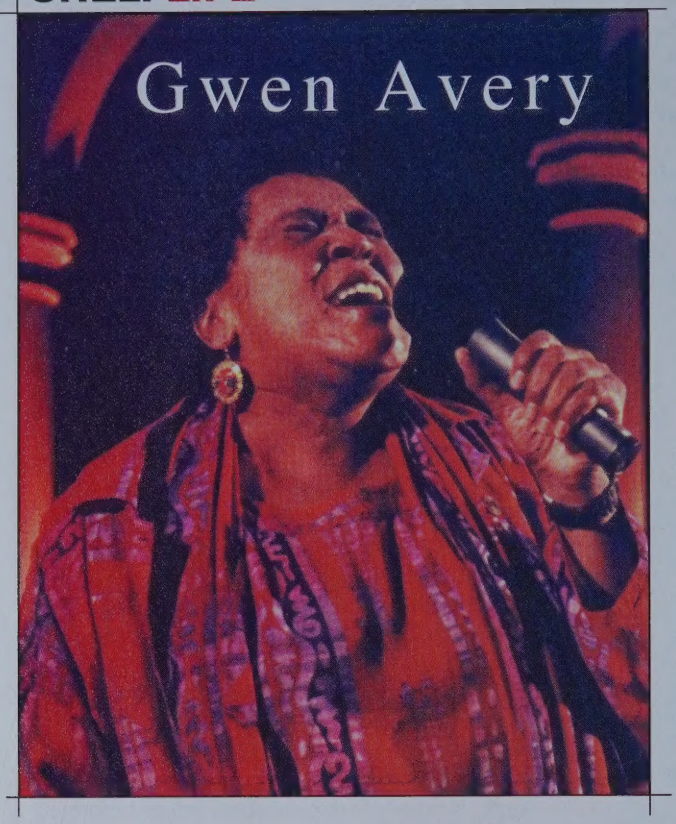
Will I Go To Heaven ?

The Black Gay Spiritual Dilemma
by Tuan N'Gai
Biazo Ministries
ISBN: 0-9710313-0-4,

For those struggling with their spiritual connection and the assurance for a glorious afterlife, N'Gai's ministry offers deliverance from fear and rejection. He is co-founder and assistant pastor of Living Faith Church of the Full Covenant in Dallas. For orders email, BiazoMinistries@aol.com.

Bestselling Author Penny Micklebury Starts her Own Publishing House by Stanley Bennet Clay

Agatha Christie, eat your heart out. Not only has best-selling author Penny Mickelbury just published Love Notes, the brand new installment of her successful literary lesbian crime-fighting duo, Gianna Maglione and Mimi Patterson, but she has also done it under her own publishing company, Migi Books. Says the former Washington Post reporter: "Publishing one's own work is a way of regaining control of one's own life and destiny...not leaving crucial decisions in the hands of other people, particularly white people." Along with her life and business partner, Peggy Blow, Micklebury started Migi Books, making her a part of the tiny minority in the publishing world that own their own company.



lady sings the blues

review by Rod Montero

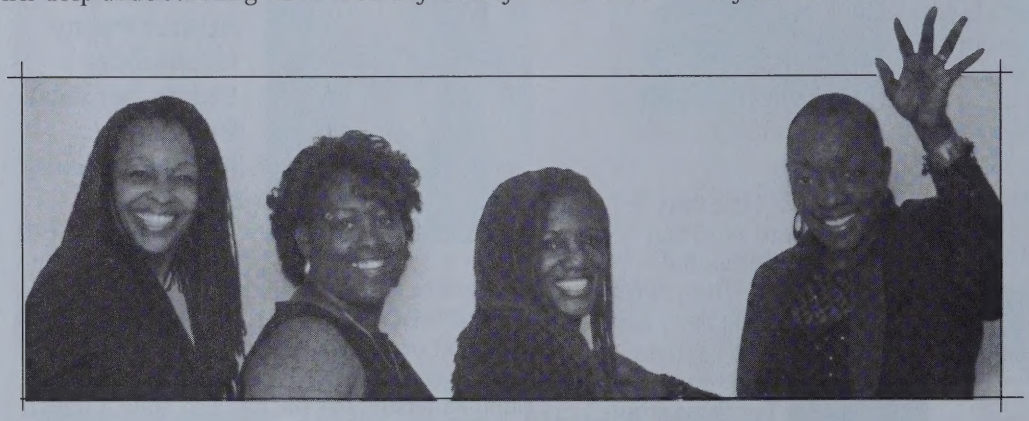
She has been called a master of the Blues. Her music has been described as sultry, bawdy, sexy, soulful, and bluesy, all fitting words to describe powerhouse songstress Gwen Avery, whose new CD, *Sugar Mama*, is a collection of her best songs.

Her success is really no surprise, since music was in her blood. Growing up in a speakeasy, she spent her youth glued to the jukebox. She credits the speakeasy's diverse clientele for teaching her about music, poetry, and Blues, as well as her Irish-barbershop singing uncles. "The Irish and the black people were culturally alike in many ways because they were poor and they were working families," she said.

But her mentor was Herman Heddon, who not only nurtured her musical gifts but, as a gay man (the first she had ever met), also influenced her coming out as a lesbian at age 12. She made up her mind that she would be her own person and never let anyone tell her what to do. Gwen said that her raw ambition and iron will came from the feeling that women and girls weren't safe. "That's how you survive, you'd have to have this crust...and you never break, no matter what."

She did not just survive, she thrived. For three years in the early 1970s, she sang in Gregg Young's band, Full Moon. She sang on the Varied Voices of Black Women with Linda Tillery, Vicky Randle, and Mary Watkins. She also did *Any Woman's Blues*, which was sent along with books and other items to women's prison, "so they could do something besides sit in jail," Gwen said.

Sugar Mama is a testament to her far-reaching career, combining all the influences and experiences that reflect her deep understanding and beautifully conveys what Blues is really about.



fine art

Fine Art, a quartet of women of color, is a dazzling R&B group increasingly drawing acclaim. Their soulful harmonies, covers of today's hits and songs of spirituality have wowed listeners at Brooklyn Pride, the Brooklyn boutique Moshood's annual ball and the Bronx Museum, just to name a few.

Its members are Lorna Jones, who founded the band back in 1994 and worked with Kenny Rodgers and Keith Sweat's band; Yvette Thomas, an HIV counselor; Gina L. Green, a writer and a single mother, and Patricia Smith-Campbell, who exchanged vows with her life partner on Fire Island in 1996. Be on the lookout for these talented, courageous sisters as their message and music spreads throughout our nation and America's mainstream.

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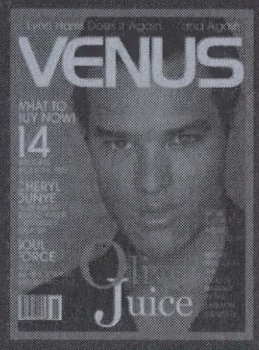

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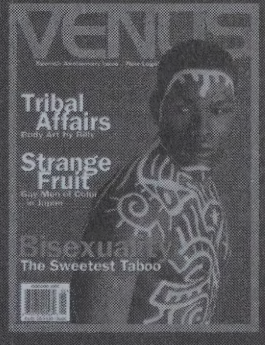

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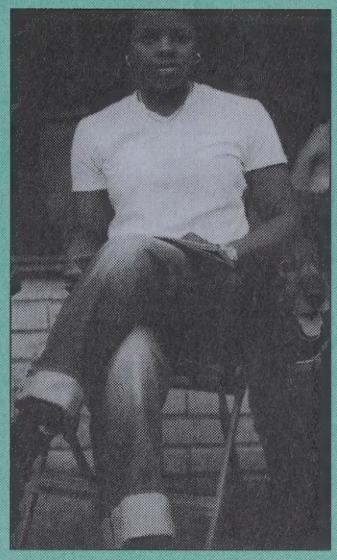

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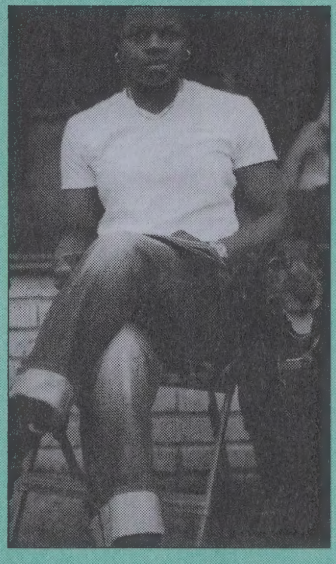

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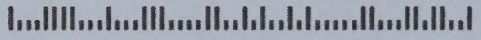

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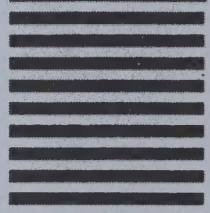

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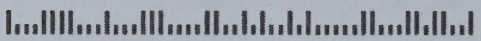

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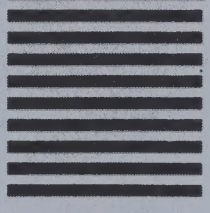

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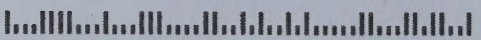


stone cold Angie

words by Michael K. Watts

"I want all of my strong Black brothas to put their hands up... Homos, put your hands down!"

On her sophomore album *Mahogany Soul* (J Records), soul siren Angie Stone took a bold step in releasing as the first single "Brotha," a high-powered, urban anthem heralding the strength and honor of Black men. She fearlessly risked rejection from mainstream audiences to motivate Black men and put an end to "brotha-hating." But some of Stone's fans believe her empowering words of praise only apply to straight Black men.

On August 18 of last year, Stone, 37, performed at the South Ward African-American Street Festival in Newark, NJ and allegedly made offensive statements toward gay Black men. Stanley L. Crawford, a gay Black man who attended the show, says Stone introduced her performance of "Brotha" by saying, "I want all of my strong Black brothas to put their hands up... Homos, put your hands down!"

Crawford says mouths dropped as the 400-plus crowd looked on in silent shock. Crawford kept his hand in the air and came anxiously close to walking out on the show. "I was really shocked that she would say something like that," he lamented, "I felt like somebody had slapped me across my face."

Stone claims that she does not remember the show but adamantly denies making the statements, stressing that "Brotha" applies to all Black men. "I'm like, if you're gay, stand up. If you're a strong brotha and you're gay—it doesn't matter to me. Stand to your feet," Stone said, "I really think there is just someone hating, player-hating."

"Rhonda," a straight Black woman who prefers to remain anonymous, also attended the show and was taken aback by Stone's alleged insults. "I was very disappointed by [her statements], actually, because I like her as an artist," Rhonda admitted. "To make a song like that in support of Black men and then to negate that—I didn't understand that. We're all one family."

Don Johnson, co-owner of Black Explosion Getaways, was planning to hire Stone to perform at Winter Explosion 2002, an annual black gay and lesbian ski weekend held each February. Johnson heard about the incident and reacted immediately by calling off negotiations with booking agent Brian Dickens of B D Management, who had been dealing with Stone and her management staff on Johnson's behalf. "We will not book an artist who [publicly] speaks anti-gay rhetoric," Johnson firmly stated. Johnson ultimately secured R&B soulter Ann Nesby for the event instead.

Stone maintains she knew nothing of the pending booking and never heard of Winter Explosion 2002. In the past Dickens has booked Stone for numerous shows, some with gay and lesbian audiences, and this show would have been no different. "There never was any conversation or concerns about performing for a predominantly gay-oriented event. She's done it before," Dickens said, "She's not a homophobic individual."

Ann Nesby

"My last record dealt with life, love and relationships," she says, "and we got such a good response that I wanted to continue with those themes."

Hers is a voice that will stop you in your tracks. The sheer emotional intensity demands your attention. It's hard not to wax lyrical or use superlatives when describing Ann Nesby's heart-filled, God-given gift. In the oft-times 'here today, gone tomorrow' music biz, she's the real thing, the epitome of true soul-to-the-bone singing. You can hear it from the very first notes of "Seasons," the opening track all the way to the final few bars of "You Always Cared," the last song on Ann's superb sophomore solo album, "Put It On Paper" on *Its Time Child Records.*

"I was in Philadelphia and [Rev. Al Green] flew in to record it and it was amazing. I mean, historic! Gamble & Huff stopped by during the session and it was just magical."

PUT IT ON PAPER

THE PRINCESS OF SOUL TAPS AL GREEN FOR A DUET ON HER LATEST PROJECT.

Musical diversity is the key component on the album using her dynamic vocal skills, Ann moves seamlessly from traditional R&B and pop to sizzling dance music, infusing each track with her distinctive, gospel-honed brand of vocal artistry.

Going beyond her sterling work with the award-winning Sounds of Blackness and her much-acclaimed 1996 solo debut *I'm Here For You*, the multi-talented singer, songwriter and producer is in her prime with her latest project. With typical modesty, Ann declares, "I wanted to make an album you could put on from beginning to end without skipping a song, a record that has a musical flow to it." Working with producers Herb Middleton, Gerald Isaac, Brian Alexander Morgan, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, John Forbes & Douglas Grigsby, Mousse T and Steve 'Silk' Hurley, Ann has crafted a record filled with standouts and future classics.

"Put it On Paper," an unforgettable duet with the legendary Al Green, recorded at the famed Gamble & Huff-owned Philadelphia International Records studio is a case in point. "We caught up with the Reverend Green when he was on tour and we had sent him a tape of the song," she recalls. "I was in Philadelphia and he flew in to record it and it was amazing. I mean, historic! Gamble & Huff stopped by during the session and it was just magical."

It goes without saying that the album includes several enduring, truth-telling ballads such as "I Can't Get Over You" and "I'm Your Friend" (a duet with producer/keyboardist and artist in his own right Big Jim Wright with The Sounds of Blackness on background vocals). Then there's "Advice"- one of the nine songs Ann co-wrote for the album – a brilliant true-to-life opus that features Ann's talented daughter Jamecia Bennett. "My last record dealt with life, love and relationships," she says, "and we got such a good response that I wanted to continue with those themes."

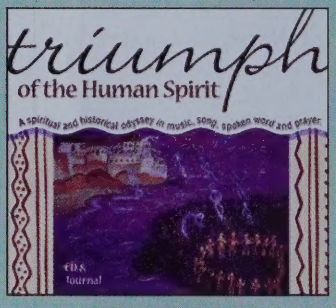
While Ann's pre-eminence as a balladeer of the first order is evident throughout "Put It On Paper" she shows her appreciation to the loyal following she's created over the years in the dance music community (through her own "Hold On," "Can I Get A Witness" and Sounds of Blackness classics "Optimistic" and "The Pressure") with some truly passion-filled rhythmic grooves. A brilliant cover of "Lovin' is Really My Game," originally recorded by Brainstorm in 1977 and later reprised by both the late Sylvester and Betty Wright is an obvious dance floor smash; while "Let Your Will Be Done" is a joyous gospel workout. "I figured we could do something for the dance and gospel audiences with that tune and working with (Chicago house music legend) Steve 'Silk' Hurley was wonderful," she says.

Music for the Soul

We want people to have a good time but we also hope they'll come away thinking about making a better world," says entertainer Jenny Burton of her show The Jenny Burton Experience. *Backstage* said, "It is difficult to convey in words the extraordinary feeling of exhilaration one feels seeing the Jenny Burton Experience."

Jenny Burton's extraordinary career has taken her around the globe, from New York City's Lincoln Center, Copacabana, Paris Garage and Plaza Hotel to the Cannes Film Festival. She has also sung in Jamaica, Berlin, Paris, and a live performance for 260,000 people at the Washington Monument in the nation's capital. She has appeared with Harry Belafonte in the movie *Beat Street,* and has recorded several hit songs such as "One More Shot," "I Remember What You Like," and "I Got a Bad Habit." Burton's show, The Jenny Burton Experience ran for seven years of sold out performances at New York's "Don't Tell Mama."

Hush! Somebody's Calling My Name



Serving as a musical tribute to the ancestors who suffered and perished in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, *Triumph of the Human Spirit* gushes with stimulating music, spoken word and the soothing yet haunting sounds of the ocean.

Standard spirituals and gospel hymns that have been sung for generations form the bulk of this project. A rendition of "Amazing Grace" summarizes the faith and determination of the children of the Diaspora.

"Lord, How Come Me Here" gives a voice to the despair of those who have tread before us. An upbeat arrangement of "Hush (Somebody's Calling My Name)" shines, and a soul-stirring rendition of "God Is" exemplifies African-American's centuries long dialogue with the Creator.

Woven throughout the work are poetry and quotes exploring the experiences of those victimized by slavery. An original composition entitled "Jackie's Jazz" portrays how the usually beautiful characteristics of womanhood vanish when crammed in the belly of slave ships.

Africans and Americans recorded the powerful "Chamber of Prayers" in a West African cell where slaves had once been held. The artistic accompanying journal *Triumph of the Human Spirit,* includes a historical overview and thought-provoking questions, appropriate for self-exploration or classroom discussion. *Triumph of the Human Spirit* washes with ethereal music and thoughtful words that remind us of the great tragedy that we must never forget. For more information or to order the CD log onto www.triumphofthehumanspirit.com

sitcom

Lunden De'Leon Stars as First African-American Lead on INTERNET TV Show

"It sends a positive image regarding the world of Black executives in Hollywood."

For the last few years there has been great debate about the lack of black faces on network sitcoms. But now renowned actress-comedienne Lunden De'Leon is set to star in a brand-new sitcom to be aired this year entitled simply *Sitcom*. But this will not be just any new sitcom; it will break ground as the first-ever situation comedy show airing solely on the Internet. Sitcom is the creation of the Television Internet Broadcasting Network, an innovator and pioneer in Internet series programming, and will be airing this winter on www.televisiononinternet.com.

"*Sitcom* could easily finish in the top ten of any network this season," says the veteran performer who will be making Internet history. De'Leon's career has spanned every part of the art spectrum. She has appeared in over 50 movies and television show and has graced the pages of *Swimsuit Illustrated*. "As a black woman, I am very proud that *Sitcom* shows that African American women can be funny, beautiful, and intelligent," she says about her show.

In the pilot episode, De'Leon played one of the fictitious heads of Television Internet, which has just completed a hit series called *Muscle Beach*. Riding high on its success, the network then decides to give the OK for *Muscle Beach* producer Justin Chase (played by Allen Burns) and his marketing and promotions head Brandy Dubuffet (De'Leon's character) to produce the next series for the network.

De'Leon explains that having an African-American woman as one of the fictional network heads was important to the production of the show. "It sends a positive image regarding the world of Black executives in Hollywood," De'Leon explains. *Sitcom* promises to be a hilarious, innovative new show everyone can enjoy and on many different levels.

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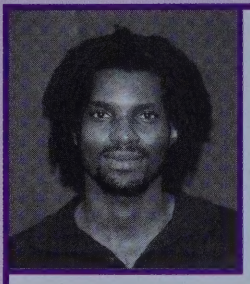

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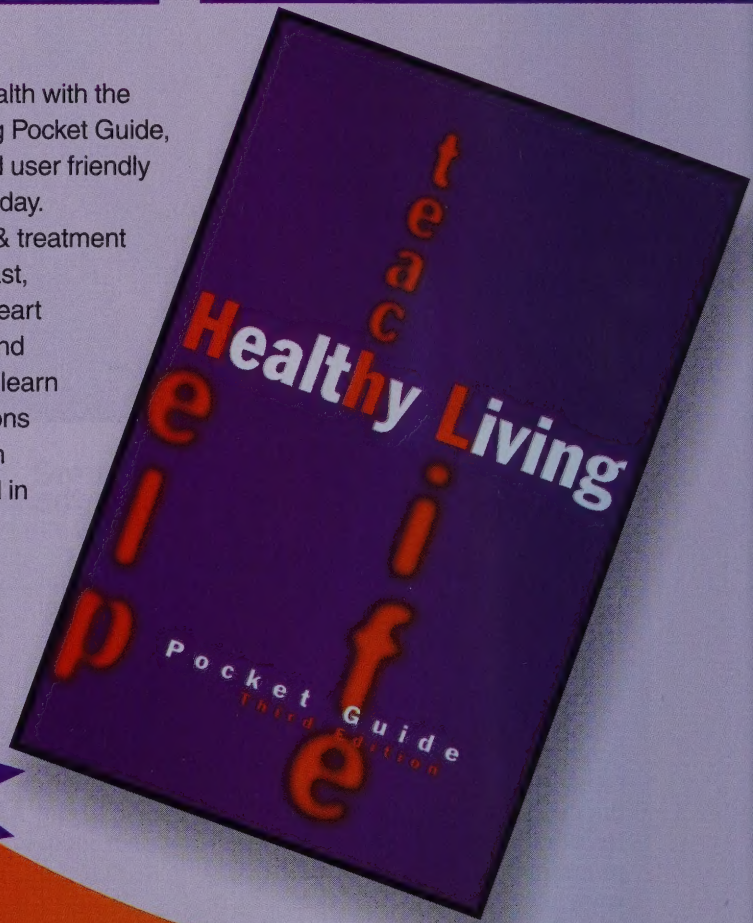

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i'll fly away

review by Phil Petrie

The Execution of Wanda Jean

HBO airs documetary of her last days on death row.

"Was Wanda Jean Allen a victim, too? In my opinion, the film won't change any minds on that score."

The nation has grappled with the efficacy of capital punishment since its resurrection in 1976. Some groups argue that on its face the death penalty is "cruel and unusual punishment." Others argue that capital punishment is a deterrent to violent crimes, observing that the punishment at least deters the recipient of the death penalty from killing anyone else. Yet another faction believes that the death penalty is unfair in that it disproportionately affects the poor and minorities.

According to Bryan Stevenson, executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Ala., "In some Southern states, two-thirds of those executed have been black. Some 75 percent juvenile offenders executed in the U. S. have been people of color . . . Of the nine teenage girls executed in United States history, eight were African American and one Native American."

As one cynic put it, "In America capital punishment means them without the capital get the punishment."

This came to mind as we watched Liz Garbus's documentary film, The Execution of Wanda Jean. Garbus, who received an Academy-Award nomination for her film, The Farm: Angola USA, in this new film follows the life of Wanda Jean Allen, a young black woman given the death penalty for murdering her lover. Venus was especially interested in the story since it involved two black lesbians, one of whom murdered the other. Long-time Venus readers will remember that this magazine was named for Venus Landin [1961-1993] who was murdered by an ex-lover in Atlanta, Georgia. Having killed the object of her affection, or control ["If I can't have you, no one will."], Landin's former lover shot and killed herself.

Be forewarned, this film really isn't about a lesbian lifestyle. It chronicles the efforts to save Wanda Jean Allen from execution. The filmmaker believes it to be an "unflinching investigation of the role poverty, mental health, race, and sexuality play within the criminal justice system."

Wanda Jean Allen was sentenced to death in 1989 for shooting to death her lover, Gloria Leathers, outside an Oklahoma City police station and in front of Leather's mother. The film finds Wanda Jean Allen 11 years later, her execution date just months away.

The film follows Allen's attorneys, interviews her family, as well as the victim's family members. Here's

Continued on page 87

Who Loves the Man in the Dress?

words by G.B. Mann
image by Kairo Allen

"By the way," he begins, "You know I realize that I'm not a woman, right?"

A pretty black girl clad in tight jeans, knit top and the strap of an oversized designer bag dug gently into the flesh of her shoulder as she balanced the weight with the force of the stopping and starting public bus. As she tossed long, straight, shoulder-length hair flowing from under a skullcap, one could glimpse her full, natural lips, her darting eyes, peering out in anticipation of her impending stop. Her eyes looked directly into mine more than once, and after a particularly long stare, I realized that sistah-girl was, to use a term coined by Gregory Victorianne, a "brista."

A question popped into my head. "Who loves the man in the dress?" Pulling the cord, s/he signaled for the next stop. I got off behind her and pitched this article. She agreed on the condition of anonymity. We agreed to meet the next day in a neutral place. The AromaZone coffeehouse on L.A.'s Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue.

A brass bell tinkled, announcing "Lallah's" entrance into the coffeehouse. Her perfume preceded her. Dressed in flouncy fall fashions, s/he couldn't be read, could "pass," was not clock-able. Not clock-able, that is, to untrained eyes and gaydars calibrated at lower levels. Lallah's firm (and I do mean firm) handshake was, in my mind, incongruous to the manicured nails. S/he smiled and pulled out a chair, smoothing before sitting, the gray, wool, pleated skirt hovering above thick, black hose. We were now face to face across the donut-sized table. I couldn't get over how pretty s/he was. "So ladylike," I thought, trying to imagine dick under the frill. I inhale, trying to name-that-scent. "It's Joy." I guess I looked confused. "My perfume... It's called Joy."

Lallah started right in, saying that he likes to ride public buses dressed "femininely" because "no one can tell," adding that s/he would never dress on the bus as s/he is today because it would bring too much attention and scrutiny. "I mean, what woman gets on the bus looking this snatched?!" I have no answer. "That's why I do hoochie when I ride the bus." I confess that I was not the wiser until something in the eyes said man. "Men can be so dumb... I have to play a mute sometimes so that they don't find out," referring to the many times s/he has been approached by straight men who "don't have a clue." "There were a few times I felt that if I would've said something, I might not look as pretty as I do now." In those situations Lallah said that s/he avoided eye contact, and for those particularly aggressive, just nodded to everything they said. "Trust me, these men would not have been happy campers. I've run across those who didn't mind the big surprise, but there are those..." A side tilt of the head puts a period on the sentence.

Lallah has opened the door to my original query. "Who loves you?" I ask. "Who loves the man in the dress?" S/he demurs, and exposes a big smile, one eye-tooth slightly overlaps its neighbor. "By the way," s/he begins, "You know I realize that I'm not a woman, right?" I nod yes, even though I had never really

thought about it. "Of course." He searches a wallet as he talks. "Let's just say I gets mines." Lallah produces a photo from the wallet, and hands it over the table held between index and middle fingers like a trump card in Vegas. His hands freeze, gracefully over the table. "That's my baby." I look. Pictured is the kind of brother that makes sisters go "Mmph!" Fingers animate again, twinkling like confetti falling, a gesture for the return of the King of Hearts. A kiss before slipping it back into the wallet. She repeats as if to bookend. "That's my baby." I think to myself that I wouldn't necessarily put Lallah and the man in the photo together. Let's call him Tyrone.

Lallah and Tyrone met at a family barbecue. "Not everyone knew about him, but of course, they knew about me. Look at me. It's kind of hard NOT to know." Tyrone had just moved to LA from Mobile, Alabama, a friend of Lallah's straight, first cousin. With a laugh, Lallah recalls her cousin's introduction. "He said that Tyrone was gay, and looking for some gay friends, but not my kinda gay. I almost slapped him." After meeting him, Lallah says that he felt no attraction, not because he wasn't attractive, but "because guys like him weren't usually attracted to guys like me." Lallah describes the first impression of Tyrone with a cliche. "A Southern Gentleman." After a few telephone conversations and more than a few failed attempts to hook Ty up with straight-acting friends, he joked about the two of them dating. That ended the conversation abruptly with Ty remembering that he had to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro that night. After a few weeks he called back and asked Lallah out. Well, not out-out, but, over, for dinner. That's was the start of their dating.

At first, they only met in clandestine places. At his or Lallah's apartment for dinner, or parked in Griffith Park overlooking the city lights at night. Lallah nearly spits latte telling about the time he just "smiled real pretty" and let Tyrone do all the talking when park rangers beamed flashlights through their fogged up car windows. "For a long time I never saw him before sundown. I never said anything, but I know he felt it."

The first time they were seen in the daylight, in public together was at a West Hollywood Halloween fest. It was Tyrone's idea. Lallah was a bit offended at first. "I was hot. I asked him if he thought I was a freak!" After a few days of not speaking and "no nookie," Lallah realized that it was growth for their budding love affair. "It knew it wasn't easy for Ty, so I just decided to look at it as a big party for our first time in public together." When asked why West Hollywood, s/he bangs the table causing our drinks to nearly spill onto the table. "Because (excuse my French) those white boys over there don't give a fuck!" I press him further. "For instance, you can go there and see people together, I mean types you would never see together at a black club. Two guys considered fem by black standards can be kissing, huggin' and in love and nobody looks twice." He ends by sharing the story of a time that a friend of his was told that it wasn't "dyking season" when coupled with another "soft" man. Lallah waves a hand and declares it all stupid. Love is love. This macho, DL shit is outta control."

"His hands freeze, gracefully over the table. "That's my baby." I look. Pictured is the kind of brother that makes sisters go "Mmph!" Fingers animate again, twinkling like confetti falling, a gesture for the return of the King of Hearts."

He reiterates that Ty wasn't looking for someone like him, but was open enough to give him a chance. He looks at his watch and announces that he has a nail appointment. "Can't keep Miss Thing waiting. I don't speak Korean, but I know that bitch be cussin' me out when I'm late." Before Lallah can fully rise from the table, I plead for one last question. About sex.

"Who's on top?" Lallah purses lips and bats lashes as only a drag queen can, and looks up at me through the brown eyes underneath their shade. Lallah laughs loud enough, and with enough bass, that people look up, look closer. They seem to be reevaluating gender now. Lallah stands, fingers waving again, as if to cast a spell. "Don't let the smooth taste fool you. . .clothes do not the man make... and to quote Saint RuPaul, 'It's all drag.'" With that, I stand with Lallah as she slings the designer bag over a shoulder, plants a kiss on my cheek, rubs it in, and is off, skirt flouncing again, perfume wafting again, competing for top-billing with the pungence of brewing coffee. The Java doesn't have a prayer. Joy wins, easily.

The brass bells tinkles again signally Lallah's exit. As he opens the door to exit, he extends a gold-bangled wrist back into the room and pops off a finger snap so loud and crisp that it rings in the ear like a firecracker. Everyone in the coffeehouse looks up as if released from trance. I hear Lallah's muffled giggle from the other side of the picture frame window. I stand, not looking at anyone, feeling their eyes on me. A dreadlocked and mudclothed sistah volunteers. "Well, at least she didn't overdo it. At least he/she represented a pretty black woman." Her words cull acceptance from everyone present. They all go back to their steaming cups and conversations.

G.B. Mann is publisher of the Grape Vine Press.

Grabbing the Third Rail

by Chuck Tarver

This is going to get me into trouble but it's time what I'm about to say was said. I'm reaching for the third rail! We could reduce the rate of new HIV infections in our community if we would reduce the rate of anal sex. There, I've said it!

Some will attack me as being sex negative. Others will call me a right wing religious fundamentalist, while still others will call me the black Larry Kramer. I'm none of those things. What I am is someone who is tired of not stating the obvious and in the meantime watching brothers (some of whom have been members of my own family) die. I'm tired of watching younger and younger brothers become infected.

It is clear to me that anal sex is dangerous. I don't need the Pope, Louis Farrahkan, or the local fire and brimstone preacher to tell me that. It is simple biology. Most of us now understand how this disease is transmitted.

Am I the only one who sees gay (men who have sex with men) culture as promoting penetrative anal sex? Does anyone else get it? Even the HIV/AIDS service organizations promote it! Their message that appears throughout the media is "Use a condom every time you have sex." For emphasis they repeat it, "Every time you have sex!"

What they are saying is that unless there is penetration it isn't sex. They have taken a page from our 42 President and defined what the meaning of "is" is. According to them sex is penetration. For gay men (men who have sex with men) it is anal penetration. Their safety option is a thin piece of latex. Little to no effort is directed toward encouraging safer erotic alternatives.

We clearly need to redefine the meaning of sex. We need a definition broad enough to include a wide range of behaviors including non penetrative acts such as frottage and masturbation. Acts that are proven to be safer than penetrative sex, even with condoms.

Yet, throughout our community it is believed that unless you are either penetrating or being penetrated, you are not having sex. Even young men, some of whom have little or no sexual experience hold that belief. They have already concluded that anal sex is simply a "fact" of gay life. They come by the belief honestly. It is the message transmitted by their gay and straight peers, their parents, HIV/AIDS service organizations, the porn industry and society in general. Everything tells them that anal sex is the "norm." They join in the practice without questioning. If condoms are handy, they may use them. If they are not, they don't.

At the same time, we have come to believe that these young black men are becoming infected because they lead secret lives. Article after article tells us, that if they would just declare themselves "proudly gay" all their problems would be solved and we could get a handle on the rate of new infections. We are told to look at how the "gay" community has dealt with the problem. We are led to believe that if they would just venture forth and "come out" from their secretive lives, all would be well. Yet, none of those challenging these young men to change their lives, will challenge a culture that promotes penetrative anal sex as the norm.

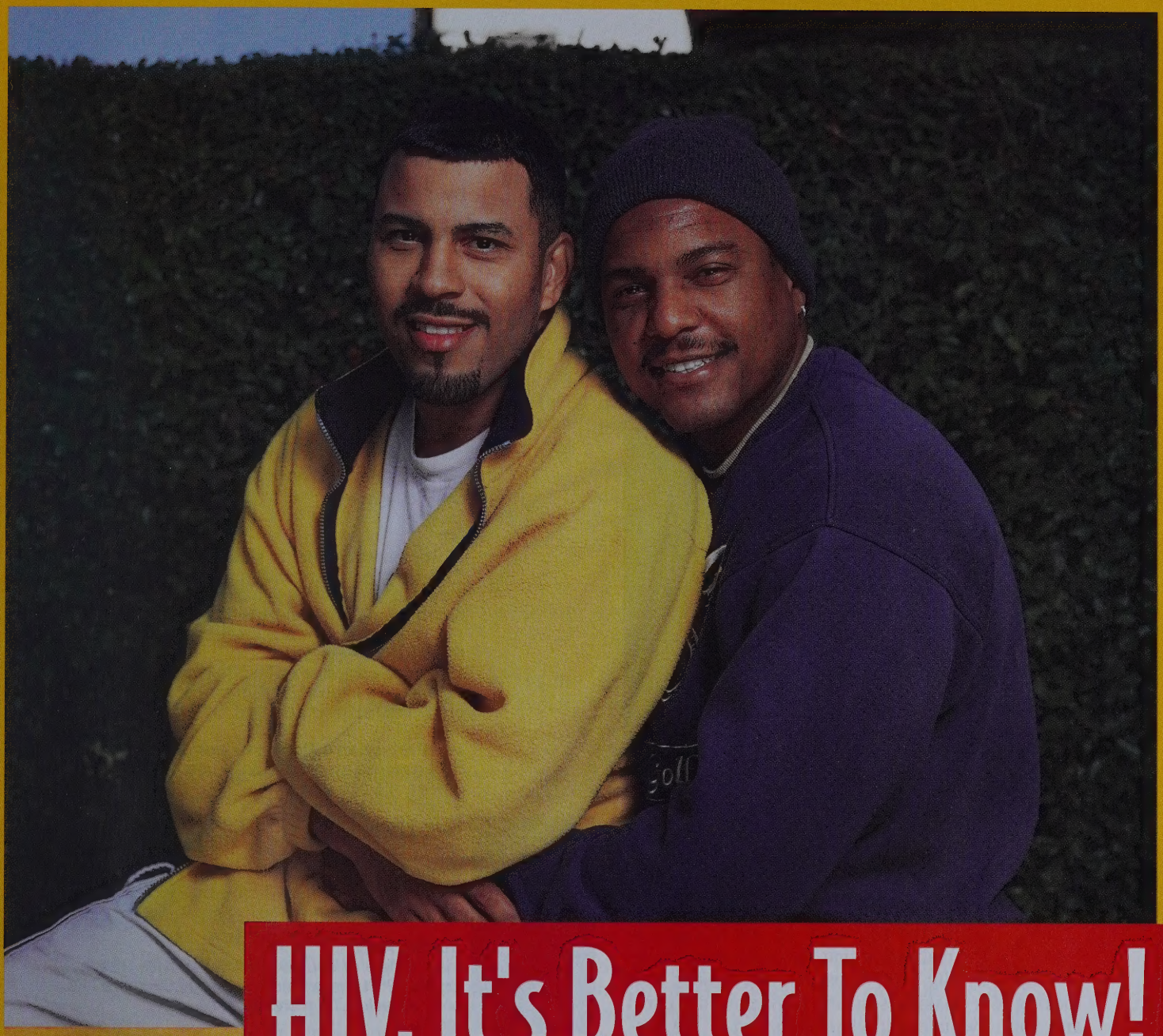
The secret lives of these young men, while problematic relating to issues of self worth and self esteem, is not what's causing the high rates of infection. Truth be told, they could continue their secretive lives if they changed from the high risk behavior that they have come to see as "what sex is all about." It's penetrative anal sex not their secrets that is infecting them. The very behavior that is promoted by the culture as the norm.

I am not calling for a ban on anal sex nor am I suggesting that HIV/AIDS service organizations stop the practice of condom distribution. I'm calling for open and frank discussion about what we find erotic. I'm calling for a change from a culture that promotes penetrative anal sex as the standard, to one that is open to a broad range of sexual behaviors and presents them all as equally "normal" in our sex lives.

We also need to discuss the dangers and pleasures of anal sex. Men who enjoy it will continue to practice it. It is important that they learn to do so safely.

We will never get control of the rising HIV infection rates among young black men without challenging our current culture. A culture that promotes penetrative anal sex as the standard.

Chuck Tarver is owner/editor of www.Blackstripe.com.



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CLOSER THAN CLOSE

Keeping Your Love Fires Buring

by Annette Segal

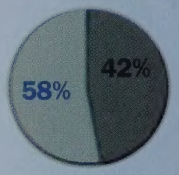
image by Ron Singleton

So you and your lover have been together a while and you wake up one morning to the realization that the honeymoon is officially over. Those hot and steamy, bed-rocking love-making sessions have slowed a clawl and you're wondering what happened to the passionate fires that consumed you both in the beginning. Or the bed is still rocking but with a different person every month or week because you get bored so easily. Is sexual boredom 'normal' or more difficult for gay couples to over come? First, realize that fire does fizzle. 'Bed Death' can strike most unexpectedly even the most loving couples. It's like scratching a place that doesn't itch any more.

On the one hand it is natural that couples might not be able to keep the fevered fires of the early passion going months later. And yet, gay and lesbian sexuality has such tremendous potential and variety that 'Bed Death' is in reality nothing but a myth. Long-term relationships between couples need not necessarily end up in boredom and there is no physiological reason for the same. [In fact, The 2002 Venus Black Gay Sex Survey shows that most black gay and lesbian couples are having enjoyable sex.]

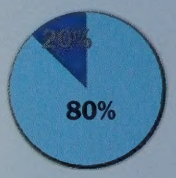
The Truth About Sex When You're Black and Gay! VenusOnline Sex Survey Results

Sistahs



Single?
42% surveyed, single women
58% women in relationships

Getting Any?
Women, single or coupled, sexual activity.
43% twice a week or more. **29%** about once a week, **18%** more like once a month, **10%** more like once a year



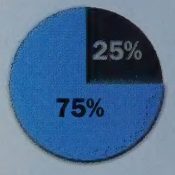
Monogomous?
Of those women in relationships, 80% women are monogamous. 20% [1 out of 5] is having sex with other women.

Bi?
Of women who prefer to slee with other women 77% have not slept with a man for one year or more, 16% have slept with a man less than a year ago, 7% have never slept with a man.

Good Sex?
Of women having sex with other woman, 42% are experiencing intense orgasm everytime, 39% Most of the time, 19% Hardly ever

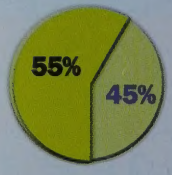
Use Protection with man or woman?
70% nevcr use anything, 26% use when feel necessary, 4% use every time.

Brothas



Single?
75% single men
25% in relationships

Getting Any?
men, single or coupled, sexual activity, 31% everyday, 25% three times a week, 26% more like once a week, 17% more like once month.



Monogomous?
Of those men in relationships, 45% men are monogamous. 55% are having sex with other men.

Bi?
Of men who prefer to sleep with other men 57% have not slept with a woman for one year or more; 34% have never slept with a woman; 9% have slept with a woman less than a year ago.

Use Protection with man or woman?
47% use every time; 39% use when feel necessary; 14% nevcr use anything.

Sexual Style?
49% I don't prefer 'top' or 'bottom.' I enjoy both; 20% I look like 'top' but prefer penetration; 16% I look like a 'top' and I am; 12% I look like a bottom and I am; 1% I look like a 'bottom' but prefer being the penetrator.

"So what is it that makes the zip go out? Emotional reasons seems to be an answer. Start by changing your focus from sex to intimacy."

Unlike most skills, we are rarely taught how to communicate on a deep level. And in our busy lives, we often share the details of our days rather than the contents of our hearts. Intimacy is a habit that needs fostering like a good tennis serve. And the results are far more beneficial.

TIPS ON IMPROVING INTIMATE CONNECTIONS

1. Start small. And start with yourself. It's so easy to expect "the other" to be responsible for communication and connection.

2. Avoid setting up a "serious conversation." Its almost guaranteed to build stress and cause avoidance.

3. Be more forthcoming about your own feelings. Use the phrases like "I wonder if..." or "Sometimes, I doubt whether I..." or "I've noticed I'm happiest when..."

4. State your feelings rather than your opinions. If what you're saying includes the word "that," hold back! Warning: most sentences of feeling that contain the word "that" - aren't! They're judgements! Use your smarts here. Think about it. Saying something like "I feel that she [or you)..." is not stating a feeling – its an opinion. That's very different. Feelings words are words like: ashamed, embarrassed, sad, apprehensive, frightened, delighted, excited, nervous, serene, etc. Intimacy is built on feelings, not critiques. Watch how you express yours.

5. Ask questions about feelings. "How do you feel about that?" is not the same as "What do you think about that?" Most of us express our thoughts far more easily and often than our feelings. Yet sharing what we feel is what connects us to another. When you've asked the question and your partner responds with, "I think..." listen carefully and try to focus on the feeling behind the thoughts. A gentle, "Umm, I get your thinking and I'm wondering how you feel." This takes practice – for both of you.

6. Remember, a deep breath is a good tool before plunging in. It's not helpful to criticize by pointing out what's lacking when your partner shares.

7. Practice courage. When you find yourself avoiding a topic, analyze why it's hard to bring up. Ask yourself, "What concern, need, fear or desire is attached to this topic. What am I trying to avoid?" You may need to ask this question many times before the answers reaches you through whatever filters you've may create to bypass a difficult issue. You may want to jot down the answers.

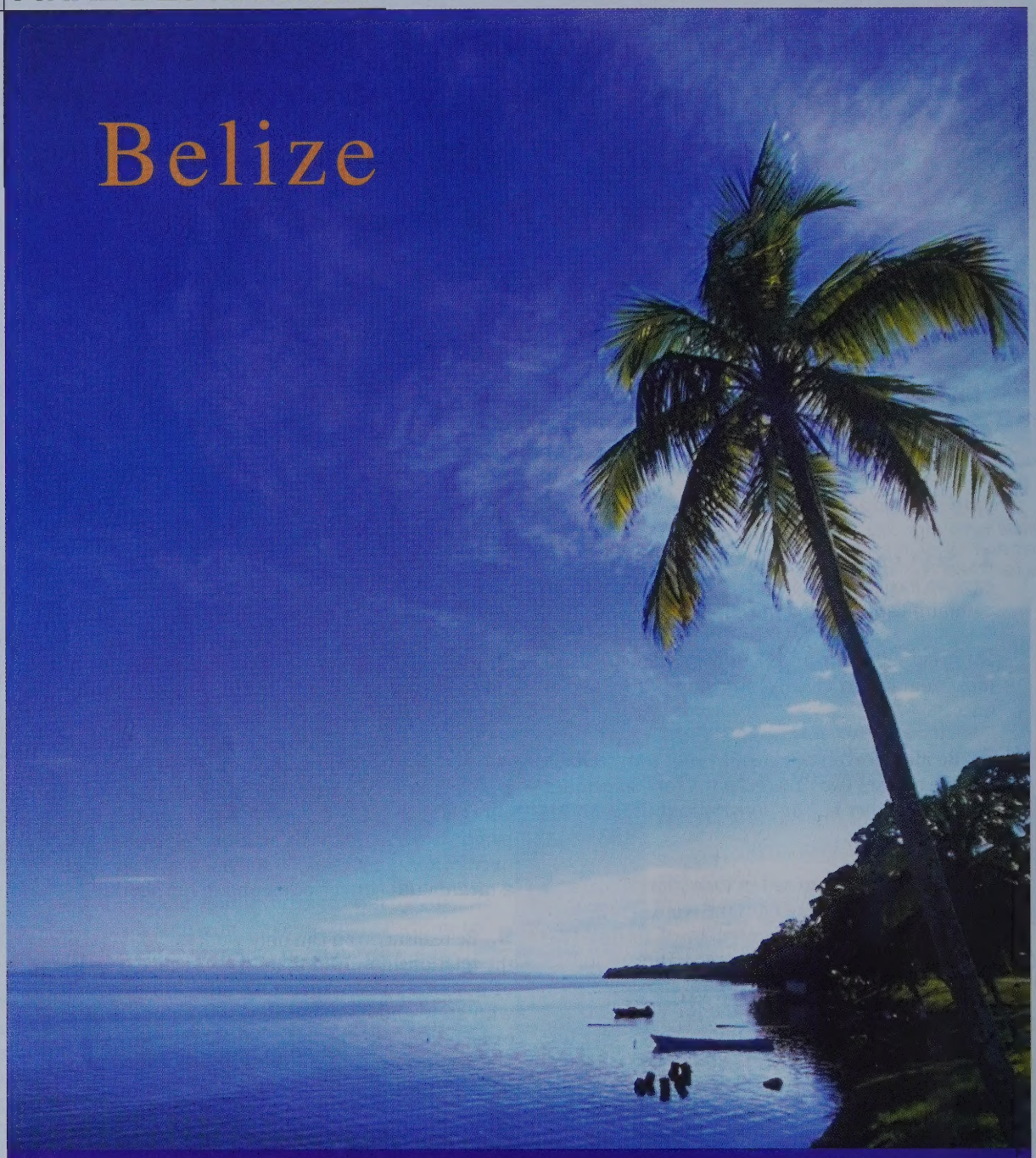
8. When you're clear on what makes a particular issue a "hot button" topic, take a deep breath. Develop an "I" statement to open the dialogue. "I" statements avoid blame. They are statements over which we take responsibility rather than point a finger. "I feel frightened when weeks go by without cuddling," or "I felt secure when you told your parents we couldn't visit until my big project was over," are examples of "I" statements. They open a meaningful conversation and invite sharing.

9. Be realistic. You can only work on your end of the relationship. And that takes practice, a sense of humor and courage. Like any skill executed with style and confidence, practice and realistic expectations are the main ingredients. And when you fumble, laugh at yourself. Failure is only feedback on how to succeed next time.

When working on creating a connection, remember to start small, start with yourself, be ready to laugh at yourself, develop courage, be realistic and be patient. And try and try again. The result is a rock solid love that binds you and your lover and reignites the fires of passion.

Annette Segal is co-author of "The Game of Truth: A Humorous Guide to Self-Discovery" (Educational Dynamics Press, 2000, ISBN 0966887603) and is a leading edge educator, curriculum developer and workshop designer.

Belize

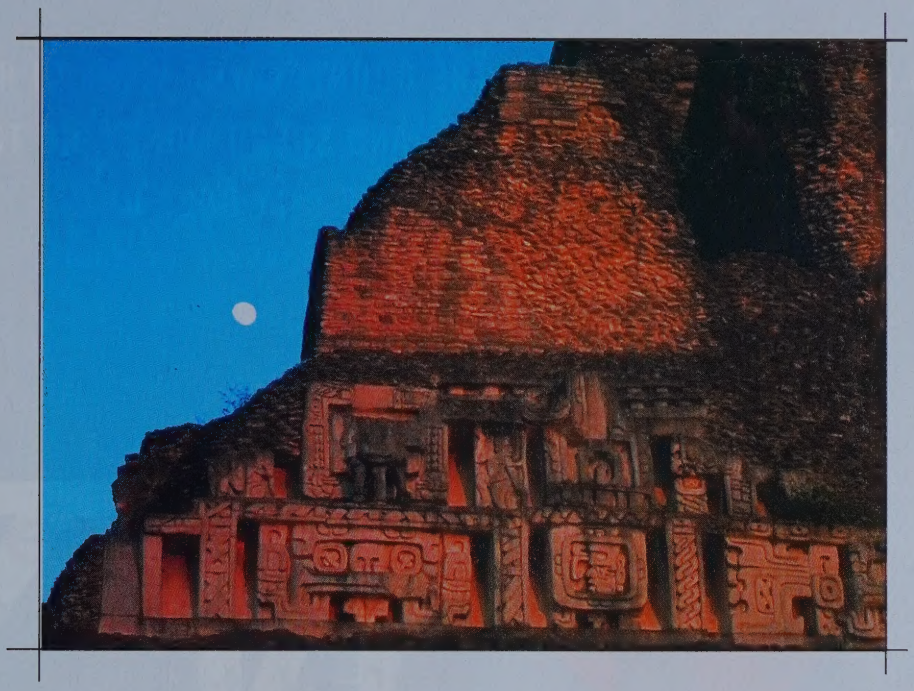


"The capital of Belize was moved to Belmopan in 1970 after hurricane Hattie destroyed much of Belize City in 1961. June to November is the rain season. No visa is required to travel but an American, European Union or Commonwealth country passport and return ticket are needed."

Nestled on Central America's Coast just south of Mexico and to the east and north of Guatemala, Belize was visited by 98 million travelers in the past 5 years. What is all the hype? Belize is a land of verdant rain forests, waterfalls, ancient ruins, wildlife, sparkling rivers, majestic mountains, cavernous caves, barrier reefs and pure white sand beaches (FOX TV's Temptation Island is filmed here). Belize is just two hours away from Miami or Houston. English is the official language. Belize was the cradle of the ancient Maya civilization and is now home to people of African, Carib, Mayan, Spanish, Chinese, East Indian, Lebanese, European, Mexican and German Mennonite descent.

accommodations

Victoria House' accommodations range from private honey-moon villas to thatched roof huts on the beach. Caribbean plantation style rooms from a bygone era are nestled within acres of tropical gardens. All accommodations are air-conditioned and feature balconies and verandahs that offer spectacular sunrise ocean views. Victoria House is located on the popular island of Ambergris Caye. Access to a 185 mile barrier reef; the world's 2nd largest barrier reef next to Australia can . But visitors may also want to just relax and watch a breathtaking sunset from hammocks right at the water's edge.



history

Belize is a country of ancient civilization. It is also a country shaped by European exploitation, slavery, colonialism, migration of peoples and the movement towards independence. The advanced ancient Mayan civilization was spread out over what is now Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Belize- "Mundo Maya". Belize is believed to have been the heart of Mayan civilization with 3/4 of a million Maya living there between 250 A.D. to 900 A.D.

Mysteriously, the Maya civilization began to fade by the year 1000 A.D. Spanish fortune hunters came in the 1500s and were deposed by British colonialists in 1798. They established "British Honduras in 1862. Logwood was the main industry of these colonialists. They bought African slaves to exploit their labor.

In 1724, the first record of slaves was documented. They originated from Jamaica, the U.S.A and Africa. Before 1750 3/4 of Belize's population were slaves (3000). Resistance to slavery manifested itself in three slave revolts; 1760,1770 and 1820.

Emancipation from slavery came in 1838. Laborers were brought from Caribbean islands and China to work on small sugar estates. The majority of the current population are Creole, descendants of African slaves mixed with European ancestry.

Creole people dominate the industries of civil service, media and politics. The Garifuna, people of African and Carib ancestry, came in numbers to Belize from the Bay Islands of Honduras in 1832. They make up 7% of the population. Mestizos, or people of Mexican and Mayan ancestry, make up 44% of the population and speak Spanish. There are also the Belizean Maya (11% of the population) who speak Ketchi & the Mopan Maya.

The independence movement in Belize won the right to self-government in 1964 but due to a territory dispute with Guatemala, Belize did not take its name or become a fully independent nation until 1981. Marcus Garvey visited Belize in 1922, a testament to the Pan Africanist spirit in Belize. The current Prime Minister is Said Musa. Marion Jones, the 3 –time gold medal winner and 2x bronze medal winner at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games is a well know Belizean.

dining and entertainment

Real Belizean cooking is spicy and sometimes hot. A staple is rice and beans with either meat, chicken, vegetables, fish or seafood. Be sure to sample conch ceviche, a local seafood appetizer. The cayes are popular for alfresco dining and fresh seafood. Try escabeche, a clear vinegar-based onion soup cooked with chicken; mole (pronounced mo-lay), a spicy chocolate-based soup made with chicken or pork, and chilmole, a dinner soup made with recado (mestizo seasoning). Belizean conch soup is made with calalloo. Cow-foot soup is a real delicacy. Garifuna influence are found in sere, a fish chowder with coconut-milk base and hudut, a seafood dish served with coconut milk and plantains.

travel tips

The capital of Belize was moved to Belmopan in 1970 after hurricane Hattie destroyed much of Belize City in 1961. June to November is the rain season. No Visa is required to travel to Belize but an American, European Union or Commonwealth country passport and a return ticket are needed. American, Continental and TACA Airlines fly from Dallas, Miami and Houston respectively. call 800/624-0686 or visit www.travelbelize.org.

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JUNE 29, 2002	ALABAMA RENEGADES vs. ATLANTA LEOPARDS	(HOME)

The Execution of Wanda Jean
continued from page 69

the rub. Was Wanda Jean Allen a victim, too? In my opinion, the film won't change any minds on that score. If you're against the death penalty, The Execution of Wanda Jean will be used as evidence to support your case. If you're for the death penalty, the same film can be used as evidence to support your point of view. This is not because of the even hand of the filmmaker; her bias against the death penalty is clear. This static situation arises because of the facts of the case and Wanda Jean's appearance. She neither acts retarded, or remorseful. We live in a society that requires sackcloth and ashes.

Testimony from psychiatric experts show that Wanda Jean is mentally retarded. There is damage to her brain's frontal lobe that is not only a cause for retardation, but also the source of an uncontrollable anger. Her brother believes this abnormality came about when a car struck Wanda Jean in her youth and she fell on her head. "She never acted right after that. That's all I know," he says. Prison psychiatrists also noted her behavior and recommended psychiatric treatment for it. Wanda Jean was in prison for murdering another one of her lovers. Somehow, she was released from prison, only to commit her second murder. At a clemency hearing, prosecutors pointed out that prior to this murder, Wanda Jean had written two threatening letters to her lover warning her if she tried to leave the relationship, Wanda would hunt her down. And so she did.

Hanging over the scene like a pall was this question: What if Wanda Jean Allen had gotten the recommended treatment? She didn't and another life fell through the crack. The defense built its case, or its hopes, on the testimony of an expert witness—a psychiatrist. Neither the clemency board, appeals court, nor the governor bought it. The final scene of this documentary is at the funeral of Wanda Jean Allen. As we look at what appears to be a restful Wanda Jean, the credits roll and someone singing in the style of gospel music's great Mahalia Jackson rivets us with "I'll Fly Away." At that moment we wondered who benefited from this death, especially since the family of the murdered woman had forgiven Wanda Jean and didn't want to see her die. I'll fly away. Oh Glory, I'll fly away.

Stone Cold Angie
continued from page 67

This kind of intense drama is nothing new to Stone. She's already survived the heartache of broken relationships, maintained hectic schedules promoting her current album and her 1999 platinum-selling debut "Black Diamond," while still carving out time to raise her two children. Today, she lives by a motto that she dedicates to her gay and lesbian fans: "Believe none of what you hear and half of what you see."

> "A brotha is a brotha at the end of the day."

Still, Crawford and Rhonda refuse to buy Stone's CD or attend her shows in the future. For Stone, the future includes a European tour in March and another set of dates in the States later this year. Stone further insists she has no problem performing for gay and lesbian audiences, and she says she'll tell audiences at future shows that "Brotha" is for all brothas." A brotha is a brotha at the end of the day," Stone affirmed, "What you choose to be and how you choose to live your life is your business. It has absolutely no bearing on anything. As long as you are happy with who you are and what God is doing in your life, who the hell am I or anyone to challenge you for it?"

Michael K. Watts is a freelance journalist based in New York.

One Mo' Time
continued from page __

gold tooth. An occasional ham or turkey would never cause as much "checking the number on your ticket" as a gold tooth. The theatre seated between 350-500 people, and as the only live entertainment house for blacks, usually held a capacity house.

Many colored performers, particularly in the early stages of their careers, alternated between the Negro variety houses and the white ones. The goal, of course, of every vaudeville artist of whatever race or color was the Palace on Broadway. Some performers from the T.O.B.A. eventually made it there and saw their names blown up into top billing--Bill Robinson, Ethel Waters, Bessie Smith, and Bert Williams just to name a few notables.

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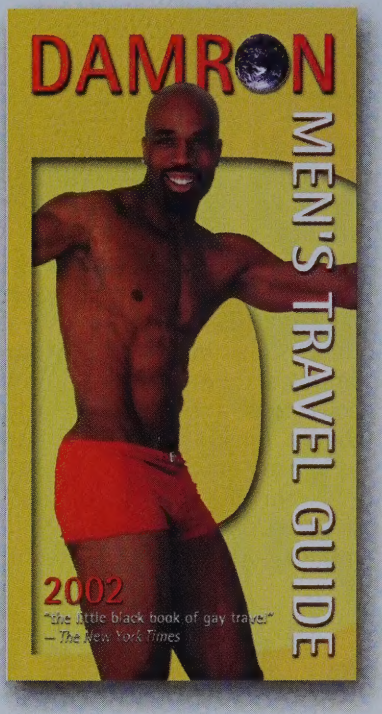

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save the date

Mick Hicks

the original queen of disco

Sylvester

edited by Malcolm Venerable

A true superstar, Sylvester represented the black, gay origins of disco and took his style to mainstream America. His versatile 14 albums include crucial contributions to the disco songbook as well as ballads, and his unapologetic fierceness led the way for other mainstream gay sensations including Boy George and RuPaul.

Sylvester James was born to a working class family in Los Angeles. After moving to San Francisco, he spent time in the experimental troupe Cockettes, where he began his performing career. After an unsuccessful stint leading the rock group Hot Band in the early 1970s, Sylvester's luck changed after meeting Harvey Fuqua, a scout for Fantasy Records. Fuqua signed Sylvester and the two began work on an album.

"Sylvester jumped at the chance to hire Izora Whitehead and Martha Wash, discovered singing background vocals at a concert."

Sylvester jumped at the chance to hire Izora Whitehead and Martha Wash, discovered singing background vocals at a concert. He renamed the hefty pair the Two Tons of Fun and they were an integral part of Sylvester's success, adding stage presence and memories of his gospel roots. "Sylvester" dropped in 1977 without much fanfare but gained cult status with a remake of the Ashford and Simpson's "Over and Over."

His greatest achievement would be Step II. As the LP was being recorded, Sylvester let Patrick Cowley, then an up-and-coming remixer, hear an early version of "You Make Me Feel Mighty Real." Cowley's transformed the ballad into a disco tour de force with synch overlays, a driving beat and keyboard flourishes. The classic tune reflected the intensity of gay disco at its best, while Sylvester's impassioned vocals communicated the anticipation of sex. Arriving at the height of disco mania, the combination proved irresistible and much to the horror of disco haters and homophobes (who were largely one and the same), he was launched into the mainstream. The accompanying video made a mockery of Fuqua's attempts to tone down his flamboyance, as Sylvester strolled around a disco in full drag. "Mighty Real" won several Billboard disco awards, shooting Sylvester into disco's stratosphere.

Despite the obvious magic he had with dance material, Sylvester never viewed himself as a disco act. He really wanted to be Patti Labelle. Therefore, he announced that Stars, his second, would be his only pure disco album. A four-track celebration of nightlife, the album dared you to sit down as he and the Tons worked the hell out of "I Who Have Nothing." Disco crashed in 1980, so Fuqua decided to branch out into other styles. He soon had Sylvester doing strange versions of "Ooh Baby Baby" and "Cry Me A River," while actually banning Cowley from entering the studio.

Creative differences led to his signing with Cowley's Megatone label after doing the lead on Cowley's "Menergy." The timing was impeccable as the label had a completed album sitting in the vaults that it couldn't release due to the singer's outrageous financial demands. Sylvester simply cut new vocals and All I Need was born. The record was highlighted by the driving "Do You Wanna Funk," a more aggressive sequel to "Mighty Real" that was a huge hit and set the template for hi-NRG.

Call Me and M-1015 were his other albums for the label, but because of Cowley's death from AIDS, Sylvester had to work with producers Ken Kessie and Morey Goldstein, who couldn't match Cowley's standard. "Take Me to Heaven," "Sex" and "Band of Gold" were all dance hits, but didn't quite compare to the Fantasy material.

After years of paying dues with small companies, Sylvester found himself on Warner Brothers for Mutual Attraction. "Someone Like You" had a Larry Levan mix, but he was unable to take full advantage of his new resources as he was diagnosed with AIDS. He stopped performing, but stayed in the spotlight to raise awareness about the disease. He died in 1988 at only 40 but with a legacy that will forever endure.

Lambrini girls just wanna have fun

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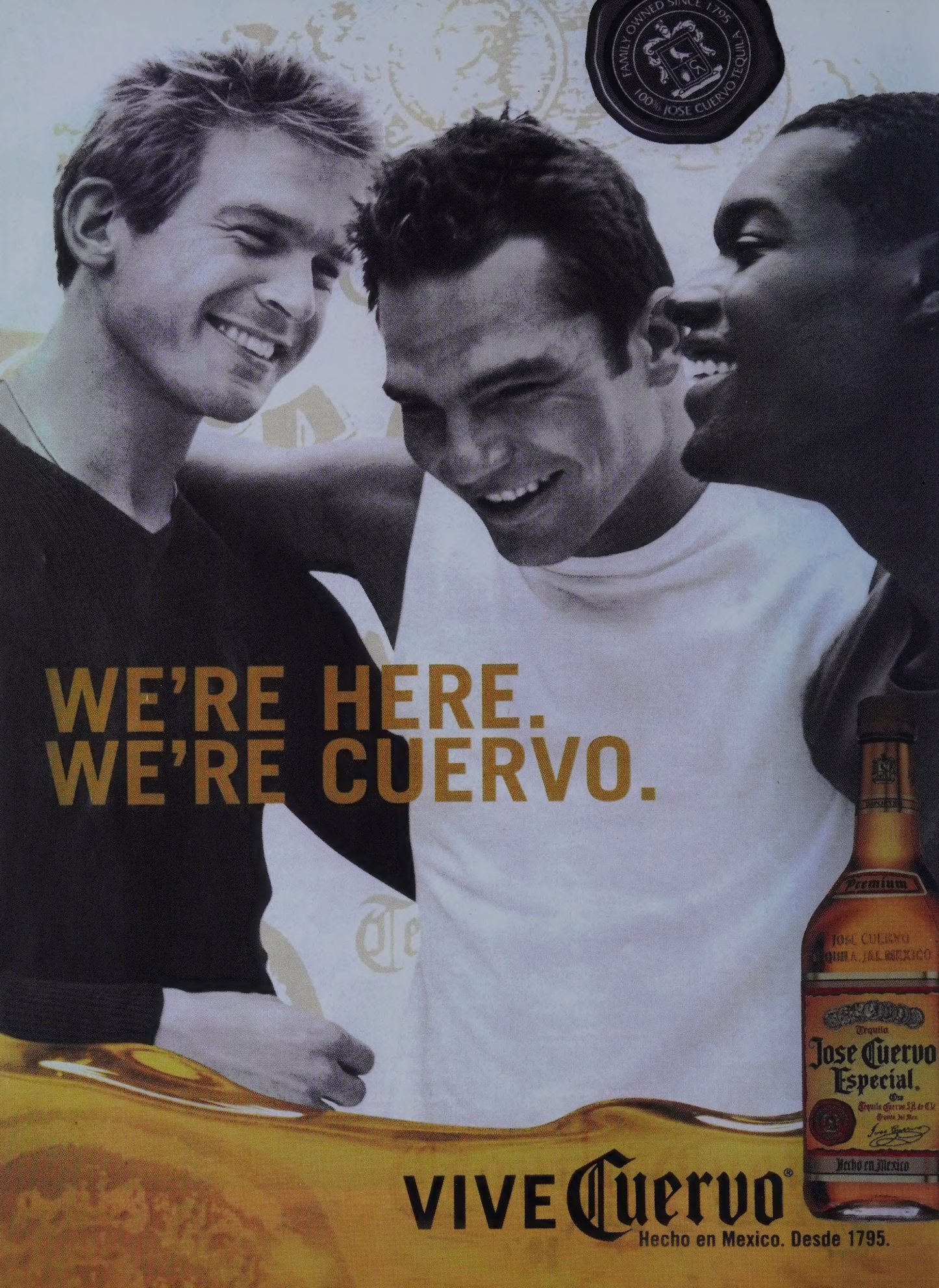
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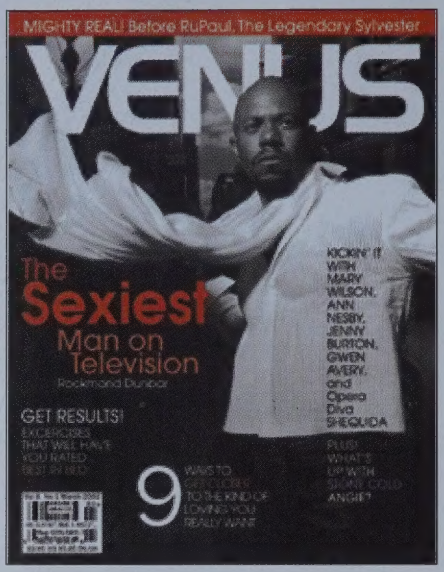

"I so thoroughly enjoyed reading your magazine. It ranks right up there with those mainstream magazines. In fact, it surpasses them. Thank you!"

Flipped Through

I had the great fortune of [picking up the last issue] at the Winter Explosion weekend. I can't say enough about *Venus* magazine. Although, I must be honest with you. Before the Winter Explosion weekend, I had only flipped through the pages of *Venus*, but on the ride back from Hudson Valley, I found myself engrossed in your pages. I love it!

Jerry T. Mooney
via the Internet

Can't Wait

Venus, as always, is spectacular. Sometimes I can't wait to get it in the mail and have to pick it up at the local newsstand first!

James McKissic
via the Internet

Accolades

I so thoroughly enjoyed reading your magazine (which I picked up at New York's Gay & Lesbian Expo), I've decided to subscribe. It ranks right up there with those mainstream magazines. In fact, it surpasses them. Thank you. Our community needs this.

Beverley Byer
Brooklyn, NY

Just Loved it!

I just loved your feature on Simon Nkoli in [Vol. 7 No. 6, 2001] issue. Many of us here in London (UK) do get *Venus* magazine and we appreciate its quality. We even like it more when you relate and feature the experiences of Black people who live in Africa or elsewhere in the diaspora. Keep up the good work!

Cheikh Traore
via the Internet

Worth Fighting For

Loved the last issue! I had to fight another girl in the office for it.

Cory McKnight
OUTCharlotte, Inc.

Keep it coming!

write us and share your thoughts

Send letters with your name, address, and daytime phone number to: Letters, c/o Venus Magazine, P. O. Box 150, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706, or e-mail us at letters@venusmagazine.com. Letters chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity. All letters submitted become the property of Venus Magazine and may be used in any media.

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Because it's easy to live with. VIRACEPT's easy dosing schedule and manageable side effects have been helping all kinds of people continue to lead their lives on their own terms.

Because it saves future options. When choosing a treatment plan, it's important to consider what options you will have in the future. Studies show taking VIRACEPT early on leaves you with choices in treatment for later. Ask your doctor about your future with VIRACEPT.

VIRACEPT®
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tablets and oral powder

VIRACEPT is indicated in combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of HIV infection. The most common side effect of VIRACEPT is diarrhea, which can usually be controlled with over-the-counter treatments. Some prescription and non-prescription drugs and supplements should not be taken with VIRACEPT, so talk to your doctor first. For some people, protease inhibitors have been associated with the onset or worsening of diabetes mellitus and hyperglycemia, changes in body fat, and increased bleeding in hemophiliacs. **HIV drugs do not cure HIV infection or prevent you from spreading the virus.**

Refer to the important information on the next page. For more information, call toll free 1-888-VIRACEPT or visit www.viracept.com.

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VIRACEPT®

(nelfinavir mesylate)

Tablets and Oral Powder

Information for Patients

about VIRACEPT® (VI-ra-cept)

Generic Name: nelfinavir (nel-FIN-na-veer) mesylate

For the Treatment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection

Please read this information carefully before taking VIRACEPT. Also, please read this leaflet each time you renew the prescription, just in case anything has changed. This is a summary and not a replacement for a careful discussion with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIRACEPT when you start taking this medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when taking VIRACEPT and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

Alert: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with VIRACEPT. Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH VIRACEPT".

WHAT IS VIRACEPT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

VIRACEPT is used in combination with other antiretroviral drugs in the treatment of people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Infection with HIV leads to the destruction of CD4 T cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of CD4 cells have been destroyed, the infected person develops acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

VIRACEPT works by blocking HIV protease (a protein-cutting enzyme), which is required for HIV to multiply. VIRACEPT has been shown to significantly reduce the amount of HIV in the blood. Although VIRACEPT is not a cure for HIV or AIDS, VIRACEPT can help reduce your risk for death and illness associated with HIV. Patients who took VIRACEPT also had significant increases in the number of CD4 cell count.

VIRACEPT should be taken together with other antiretroviral drugs such as Retrovir® (zidovudine, AZT), Epivir® (lamivudine, 3TC), or Zerit® (stavudine, d4T). Taking VIRACEPT in combination with other antiretroviral drugs reduces the amount of HIV in the body (viral load) and raises CD4 counts.

VIRACEPT may be taken by adults, adolescents, and children 2 years of age or older. Studies in infants younger than 2 years of age are now taking place.

DOES VIRACEPT CURE HIV OR AIDS?

VIRACEPT is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking VIRACEPT may still develop opportunistic infections or other conditions associated with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections, and Kaposi's sarcoma.

There is no proof that VIRACEPT can reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

WHO SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT TAKE VIRACEPT?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether VIRACEPT is appropriate for you. In making your decision, the following should be considered:

Allergies: If you have had a serious allergic reaction to VIRACEPT, you must not take VIRACEPT. You should also inform your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist of any known allergies to substances such as other medicines, foods, preservatives, or dyes.

If you are pregnant: The effects of VIRACEPT on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, you should tell your doctor before taking VIRACEPT.

If you are breast-feeding: You should discuss with your doctor the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that it can be transmitted through breast-feeding. **Women should not breast-feed if they have HIV.**

Children: VIRACEPT is available for the treatment of children 2 through 13 years of age with HIV. There is a powder form of VIRACEPT that can be mixed with milk, baby formula, or foods like pudding. Instructions on how to take VIRACEPT powder can be found in a later section that discusses how VIRACEPT Oral Powder should be prepared.

If you have liver disease: VIRACEPT has not been studied in people with liver disease. If you have liver disease, you should tell your doctor before taking VIRACEPT.

Other medical problems: Certain medical problems may affect the use of VIRACEPT. Some people taking protease inhibitors have developed new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Some people with hemophilia have had increased bleeding. It is not known whether the protease inhibitors caused these problems. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have hemophilia types A and B, diabetes mellitus, or an increase in thirst and/or frequent urination.

Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking protease inhibitors. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the face, legs and arms may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

CAN VIRACEPT BE TAKEN WITH OTHER MEDICATIONS?

VIRACEPT may interact with other drugs, including those you take without a prescription. You must discuss with your doctor any drugs that you are taking or are planning to take before you take VIRACEPT.

Medicines you should <u>not</u> take with VIRACEPT:

Propulsid® (cisapride, for heartburn)

Cordarone® (amiodarone, for irregular heartbeat)

Quinidine (for irregular heartbeat), also known as Quinaglute®, Cardioquin®, Quinidex®, and others

Ergot derivatives (Cafergot® and others, for migraine headache)

Halcion® (triazolam)

Versed® (midazolam)

Mevacor® (lovastatin, for cholesterol lowering)

Zocor® (simvastatin, for cholesterol lowering)

Taking the above drugs with VIRACEPT may cause serious and/or life-threatening adverse events.

Rifampin® (for tuberculosis), also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®
This drug reduces blood levels of VIRACEPT.

Dose reduction required if you take VIRACEPT with: Mycobutin® (rifabutin, for MAC); you will need to take a lower dose of Mycobutin.

A change of therapy should be considered if you are taking VIRACEPT with:

Phenobarbital

Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)

Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)

These agents may reduce the amount of VIRACEPT in your blood and make it less effective.

Oral contraceptives ("the pill")

If you are taking the pill to prevent pregnancy, you should use a different type of contraception since VIRACEPT may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.

Special considerations

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with VIRACEPT, talk to your doctor about possible drug interactions and side effects. If you take Viagra and VIRACEPT together, you may be at increased risk of side effects of Viagra such as low blood pressure, visual changes, and penile erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, you should seek immediate medical assistance to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

It is not recommended to take VIRACEPT with the cholesterol-lowering drugs Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible drug interactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between VIRACEPT and Lipitor® (atorvastatin) and Baycol® (cerivastatin); talk to your doctor before you take either of these cholesterol reducing drugs with VIRACEPT.

Taking St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort with VIRACEPT is not recommended. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or are planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease VIRACEPT levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to VIRACEPT or cross resistance to other antiretroviral drugs.

HOW SHOULD VIRACEPT BE TAKEN WITH OTHER ANTI-HIV DRUGS?

Taking VIRACEPT together with other anti-HIV drugs increases their ability to fight the virus. It also reduces the opportunity for resistant viruses to grow. Based on your history of taking other anti-HIV medicine, your doctor will direct you on how to take VIRACEPT and other anti-HIV medicines. These drugs should be taken in a certain order or at specific times. This will depend on how many times a day each medicine should be taken. It will also depend on whether it should be taken with or without food.

Nucleoside analogues: No drug interaction problems were seen when VIRACEPT was given with:

Retrovir (zidovudine, AZT)

Epivir (lamivudine, 3TC)

Zerit (stavudine, d4T)

Videx® (didanosine, ddI)

If you are taking both Videx (ddI) and ViRACEPT:
Videx should be taken without food, on an empty stomach. Therefore, you should take VIRACEPT with food one hour after or more than two hours before you take Videx.

Nonnucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs):

When VIRACEPT is taken together with:

Viramune® (nevirapine)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood is unchanged. A dose adjustment is not needed when VIRACEPT is used with Viramune.

Sustiva™ (efavirenz)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood may be increased. A dose adjustment is not needed when VIRACEPT is used with Sustiva.

Other NNRTIs

VIRACEPT has not been studied with other NNRTIs.

Other protease inhibitors:

When VIRACEPT is taken together with:

Crixivan® (indinavir)

The amount of both drugs in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

Norvir™ (ritonavir)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

Invirase® (saquinavir)

The amount of saquinavir in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF VIRACEPT?

Like all medicines, VIRACEPT can cause side effects. Most of the side effects experienced with VIRACEPT have been mild to moderate. Diarrhea is the most common side effect in people taking VIRACEPT, and most adult patients had at least mild diarrhea at some point during treatment. In clinical studies, about 15-20% of patients receiving VIRACEPT 750 mg (three tablets) three times daily or 1250 mg (five tablets) two times daily had four or more loose stools a day. In most cases, diarrhea can be controlled using antidiarrheal medicines, such as Imodium® A-D (loperamide) and others, which are available without a prescription.

Other side effects that occurred in 2% or more of patients receiving VIRACEPT include nausea, gas and rash.

There were other side effects noted in clinical studies that occurred in less than 2% of patients receiving VIRACEPT. However, these side effects may have been due to other drugs that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Except for diarrhea, there were not many differences in side effects in patients who took VIRACEPT along with other drugs compared with those who took only the other drugs. For a complete list of side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

HOW SHOULD I TAKE VIRACEPT?

VIRACEPT is available only with your doctor's prescription. Your doctor may prescribe the light blue VIRACEPT Tablets either as 1250 mg (five tablets) taken two times a day or as 750 mg (three tablets) taken three times a day. VIRACEPT should always be taken with a meal or a light snack. VIRACEPT tablets are film-coated to help make the tablets easier to swallow.

Take VIRACEPT exactly as directed by your doctor. Do not increase or decrease any dose or the number of doses per day. Also, take this medicine for the exact period of time that your doctor has instructed. **Do not stop taking VIRACEPT without first consulting with your doctor, even if you are feeling better.**

Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give VIRACEPT to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

The dosing of VIRACEPT may be different for you than for other patients. **Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.** The amount of VIRACEPT in the blood should remain somewhat consistent over time. Missing doses will cause the concentration of VIRACEPT to decrease; therefore, **you should not miss any doses.** However, if you miss a dose, you should take the dose as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose and future doses as originally scheduled.

Dosing in adults (including children 14 years of age and older)

The recommended adult dose of VIRACEPT is 1250 mg (five tablets) taken two times a day or 750 mg (three tablets) taken three times a day. Each dose should be taken with a meal or light snack.

Dosing in children 2 to 13 years of age

The VIRACEPT dose in children depends on their weight. The recommended dose is 20 to 30 mg/kg (or 9 to 14 mg/pound) per dose, taken three times daily with a meal or light snack. This can be administered either in tablet form or, in children unable to take tablets, as VIRACEPT Oral Powder.

Dose instructions will be provided by the child's doctor. The dose will be given three times daily using the measuring scoop provided, a measuring teaspoon, or one or more tablets depending on the weight and age of the child. The amount of oral powder or tablets to be given to a child is described in the chart below.

Pediatric Dose to Be Administered Three Times Daily

Body Weight		Number of	Number of	Number of
Kg	Lb	Level Scoops*	Level Teaspoons†	Tablets
7 to <8.5	15.5 to <18.5	4	1	—
8.5 to <10.5	18.5 to <23	5	1 1/4	—
10.5 to <12	23 to <26.5	6	1 1/2	—
12 to <14	26.5 to <31	7	1 3/4	—
14 to <16	31 to <35	8	2	—
16 to <18	35 to <39.5	9	2 1/4	—
18 to <23	39.5 to <50.5	10	2 1/2	2
≥23	≥50.5	15	3 3/4	3

In measuring oral powder, the scoop or teaspoon should be level.

* 1 level scoop contains 50 mg of VIRACEPT. Use only the scoop provided with your VIRACEPT bottle.

† 1 level teaspoon contains 200 mg of VIRACEPT. Note: **A measuring teaspoon used for dispensing medication** should be used for measuring VIRACEPT Oral Powder. Ask your pharmacist to make sure you have a medication dispensing teaspoon.

How should VIRACEPT Oral Powder be prepared?

The oral powder may be mixed with a small amount of water, milk, formula, soy formula, soy milk, dietary supplements, or dairy foods such as pudding or ice cream. Once mixed, the entire amount must be taken to obtain the full dose.

Do **not** mix the powder with any acidic food or juice, such as orange or grapefruit juice, apple juice, or apple sauce, because this may create a bitter taste.

Once the powder is mixed, it may be stored at room temperature or refrigerated for up to 6 hours. Do **not** heat the mixed dose once it has been prepared.

Do **not** add water to bottles of oral powder.

VIRACEPT powder is supplied with a scoop for measuring. For help in determining the exact dose of powder for your child, please ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

VIRACEPT Oral Powder contains aspartame, a low-calorie sweetener, and therefore should not be taken by children with phenylketonuria (PKU).

HOW SHOULD VIRACEPT BE STORED?

Keep VIRACEPT and all other medicines out of the reach of children. Keep bottle closed and store at room temperature (between 59°F and 86°F) away from sources of moisture such as a sink or other damp place. Heat and moisture may reduce the effectiveness of VIRACEPT.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

Discuss all questions about your health with your doctor. If you have questions about VIRACEPT or any other medication you are taking, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You can also call 1.888.VIRACEPT (1.888.847.2237) toll free.

Call 1.888.VIRACEPT

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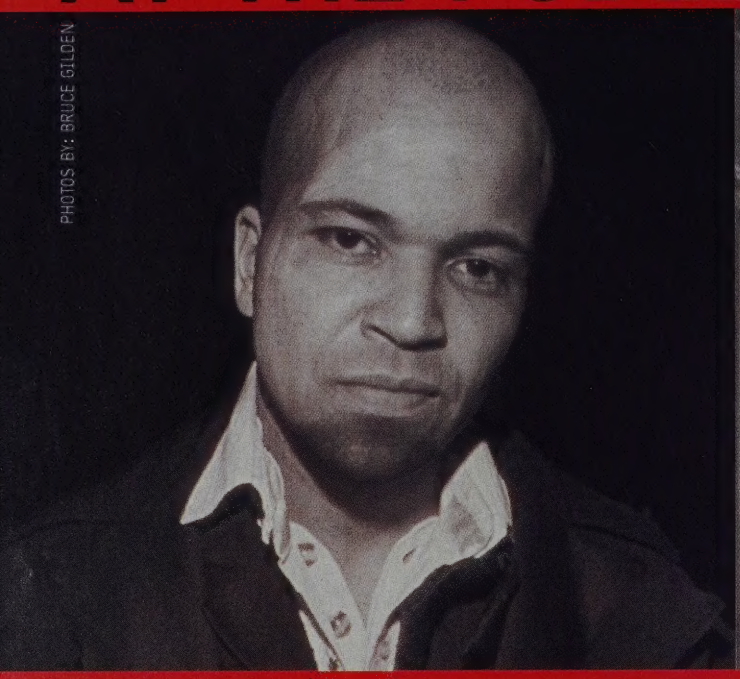
DIRECT FROM ITS SOLD-OUT RUN AT THE PUBLIC THEATER...



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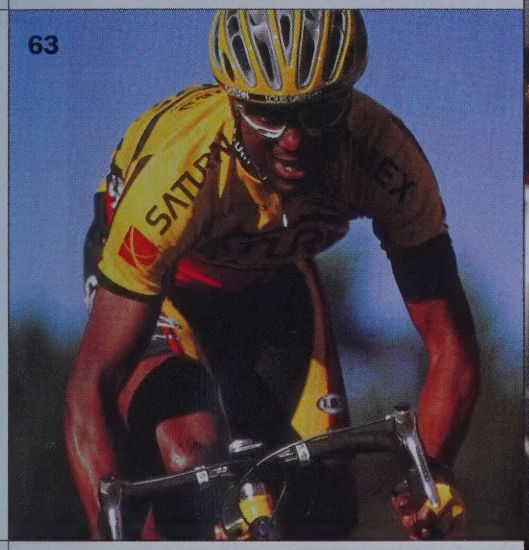

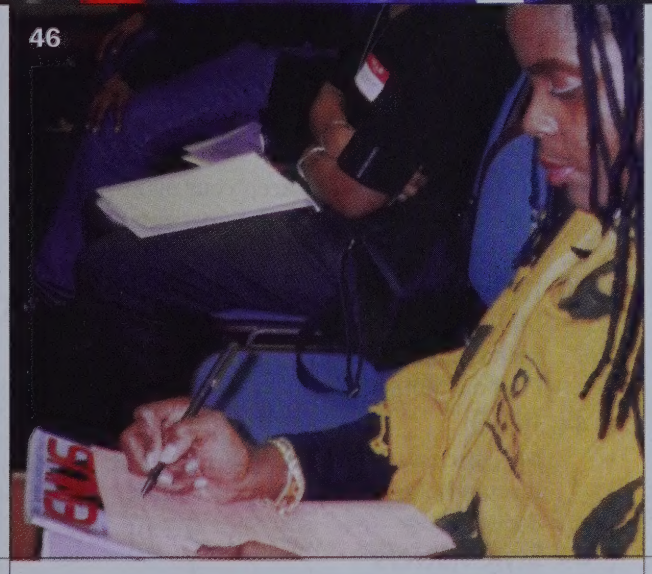

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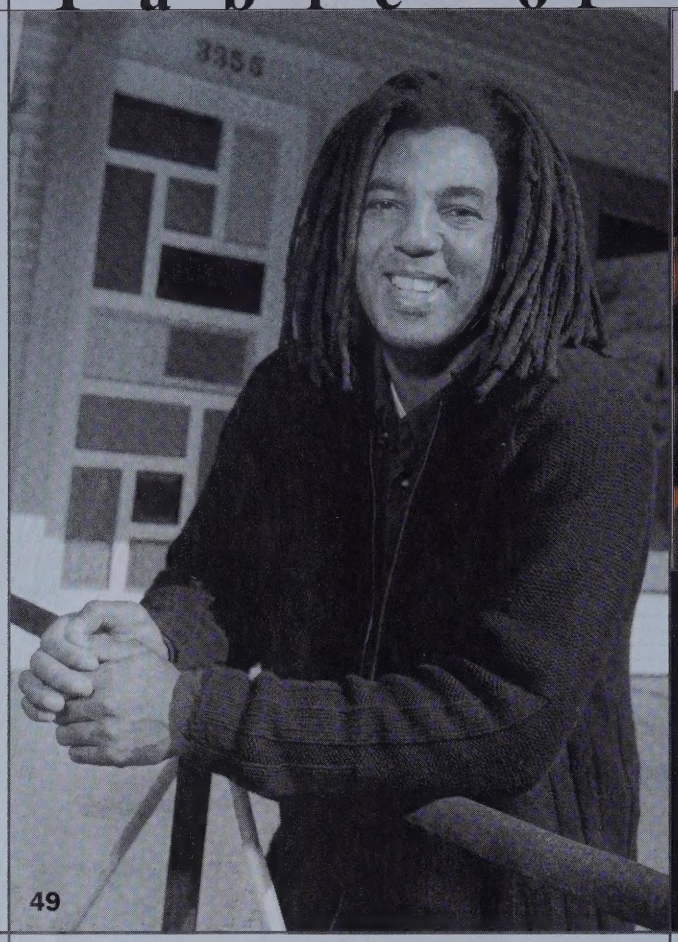

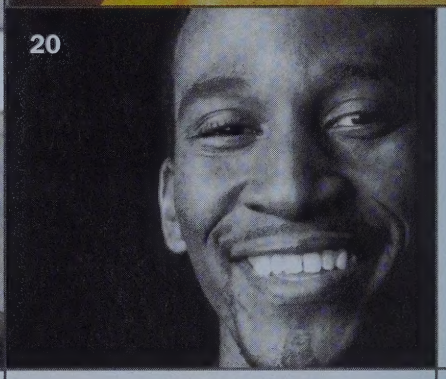

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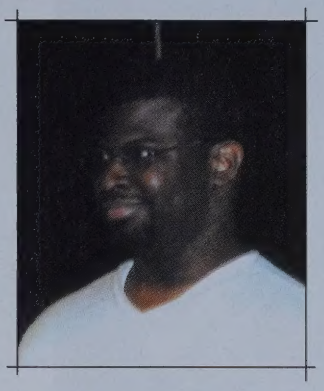
The Rev. Irene Monroe asks should we or should we not use the dreaded 'N' word?

78 Final Destination
Jumby Bay! 'Jumby' actually means 'friendly spirit' in Arawak, befitting for such a warm and welcoming place.

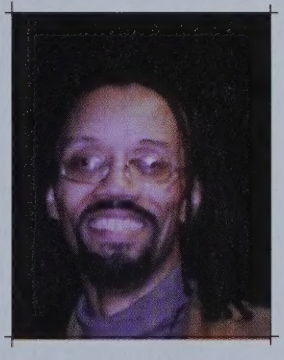
90 Legendary
We remember the uncomparable Josephine Baker. An instant hit in both France and much of Europe, her exotic, sensual act reinforced the creative images coming out of the Harlem Renaissance in America.

Michael K. Watts went toe-to-toe with "Vicious" Veronica Simmons, and shares her story "Title TBA" on page 50.. He also uncovered the alleged homophobic remarks made by Angie Stone in the controversial story, "Stone Cold Angie" in the March 2002 issue of *VENUS*. "I'm excited at the opportunity to write what I hope will be thought-provoking entertainment pieces for *VENUS*!" An Atlanta native, Michael has spent nine years as a television writer and producer, working for MTV's *Total Request Live*, the talk show *Forgive or Forget*, and *Good Day Atlanta*. Michael resides in New York City.



Luciana Lopez is the current editor of the biweekly newsletter *AIDS Policy and Law*. In the past, she's written on music, pop culture, and travel for various publications. A former resident of both Japan and Brazil, Luciana travels as often as she can scrape together the cash and the time. She's been a writer since she was 7, when her second grade teacher assigned the class a short story to write. Here, she places you front-row-center at the African American Conference on AIDS during a discuss on black men and masculinity, page 44.

Dr. Alaric Blair is the author of *The End of Innocence: a journey into the life* and has contributed to numerous scholarly journals in both literary and cultural criticism. His contribution to *VENUS* is a review of the Pulitzer prize winning play *TopDog/UnderDog* on page 22. He is currently working on a sequel to his first novel and a nonfiction text on the metaphysics of relationships. Dr. Blair teaches English at Pace University and is a resident of Brooklyn.



Holding It Down

have a great story idea?

This is a call for entries. Journalists, if you have fresh ideas to share with *Venus* readers and samples of your published work, we want to hear from you! Venus Magazine, Attn: Malcolm Venerable, P. O. Box 150, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706, or call 800/642-7535 or e-mail editor@venusmagazine.com.

Special Thanks

to our editorial team

Venus is a work in progress! Thank you to our freelancers and photographers for hanging in there with us during tough times. And special thanks to our copy editors. It'll take a few more issues to iron out all the glitches but we'll get there! Then, buckle your seat belts!!

Jeana Jones

It Takes Courage

It takes courage to step out on faith and put all your energy into what you believe you can do. That's why we're celebrating our first Sports issue. We'll introduce you to men and women who give the word FIERCE a whole new meaning. First, the vivacious boxer on our cover is so fierce, she can barely get any one to challenge her. Michael K. Watts pulls no punches in his interview with "Vicious" Veronica Simmons. In his story on page 50, we learn why Laila Ali [who is in the same weight class] won't fight Veronica.

Women boxers have been taken more seriously recently but Alicia 'Slick' Ashley explains why she feels the sport "has been set back at least 10 years" on page 54. Then, Ms. 'Tough Girl' herself Kecia 'Awesome' Snow, heavyweight champion, explains how the sport changed her life. "Boxing became my salvation from the drugging, drinking, smoking, and the late-night fights with my ex-wife." You've come a long way baby! Check Kecia's story on page. 56.

Would you feel any differently about your favorite professional athlete if you knew for sure he or she was gay? Will gays athletes ever get to be themselves professionally? These are just some of the questions raised in Phil Petrie's article "Is There a New World Coming for Gay Athletes?" on page 60. 'Hell, who cares if they're gay or straight as long as my team is winning!' seems the be the general sentiment around the office.

Women love playing contact sports and their fans are lining up to cheer them on coast to coast. The Atlanta Leopards, a new team in the Women's National Football League (WNFL), share their high hopes for this season, plus check out teams in your area, page 58.

Saturn cyclist Rahsaan Bahati hopes to follow in the footsteps of his hero, Marshall "Major" Taylor (1878-1932), America's first Black world champion cyclist. Check his story is on page 63.

So, take courage my friends! Like these athletes, if you feel you've got what it takes to make it in your favorite sport, GO FOR IT! The rewards are FIERCE!

Charlene Cothran

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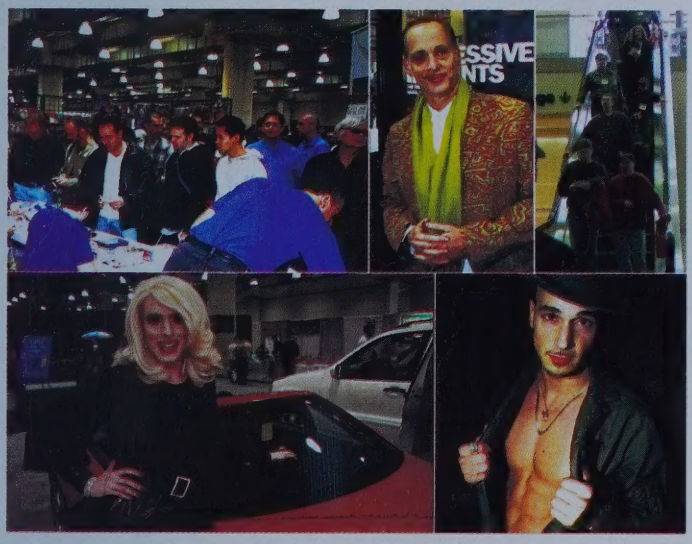

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VENUS

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief CHARLENE COTHRAN
Assistant to Publisher Kevin Chamberlain

EDITORIAL

Executive Editor Malcolm Venable
Copy Editor Nikki Hopewell
Fashion Stylist Jerry Jordan Brown
Contributing Writers Alaric Blair, denise Coles, Walter Greene, Nigel Jackson, Lucianna Lopez, Gabriella Sanom, Cheryl Miller, Irene Monroe, Phil Petrie, Charmaine Warren, Michael K. Watts, Leroy Whitfield
Photography **Cover by Jeffrey Gamble** denise Coles, Neil Collins, Jeffrey A. Griffin, Jena Jones, Charlie T, James Kahn, Natasha Papadopalou, Tina Paul

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

National Advertising Director Charlene Cothran, Higher Ground Marketing Group, 914/376-6161

PRODUCTION

Art Director Higher Ground Creative Group
Production Manager Garnet Wilson

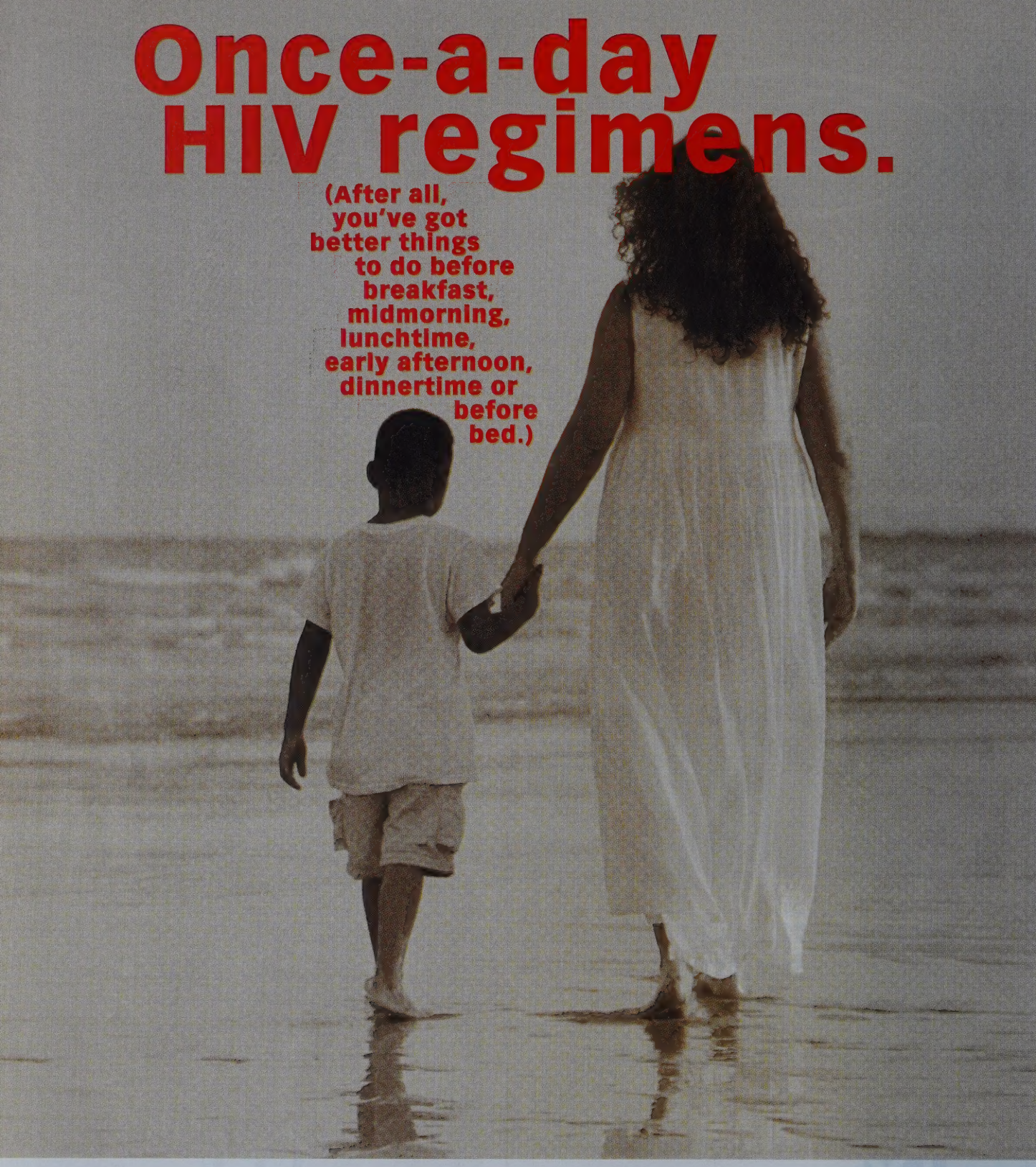
CIRCULATION

Director of Circulation Marian Farrah
New Subscribers, Address Changes, Back Issue Orders 800/642-7535 or www.venusmagazine.com

CCI

Venus is published 6 times per year by
Cothran Communications, Inc.
P. O. Box 150
Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706
914-376-6161 / Fax 914-376-4441

Printed in Canada



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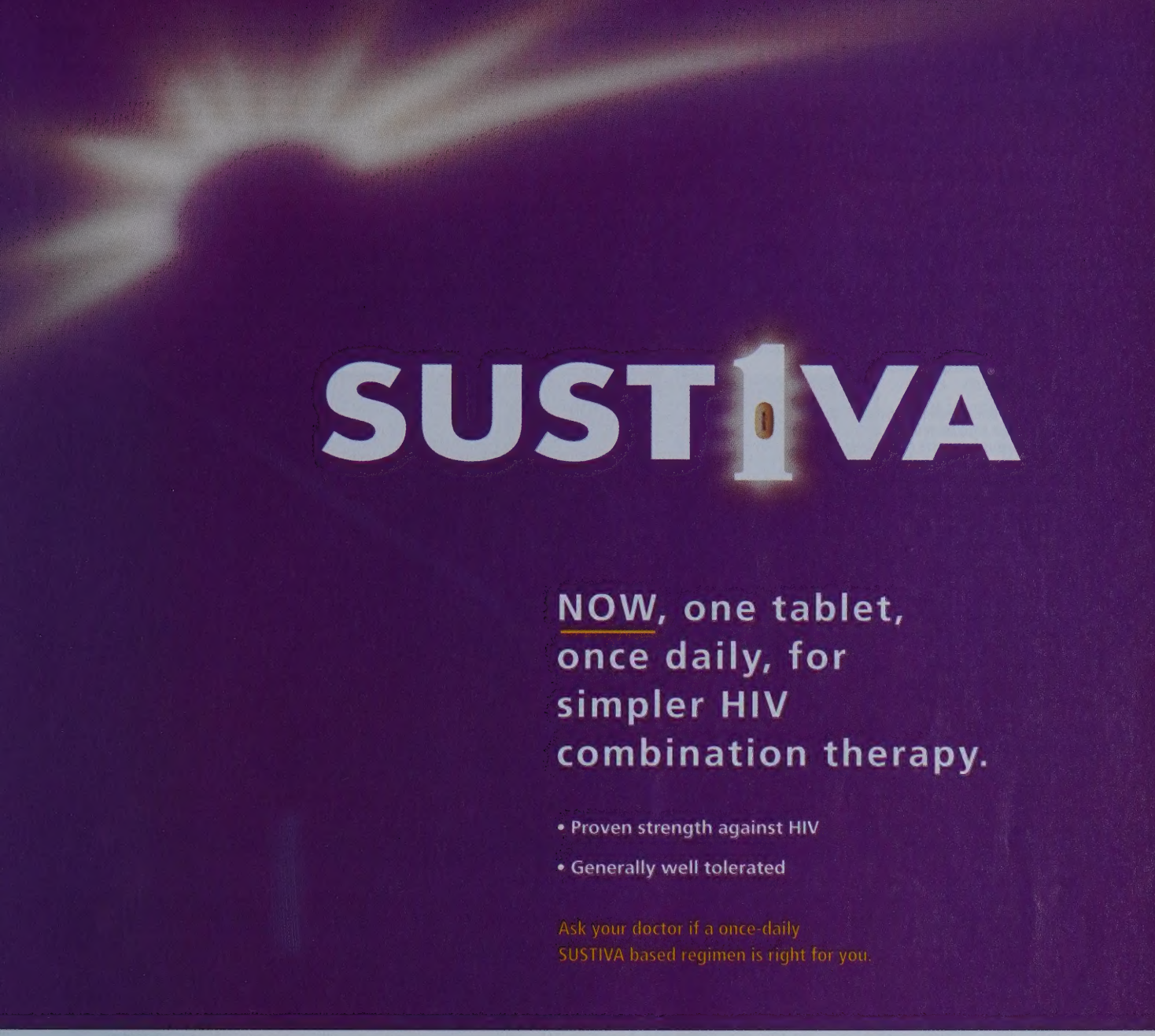

SUSTIVA (efavirenz) in combination with other antiretroviral agents is indicated for the treatment of HIV-1 infection.

SUSTIVA does not cure HIV or prevent passing HIV to others.

Safety Information

Many patients have dizziness, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, trouble concentrating, and/or unusual dreams. These feelings tend to go away after taking the medication for a few weeks. Mild to moderate rash is another common side effect. A small number of patients have reported severe depression, strange thoughts, or angry behavior. There have been a few reports of suicide but SUSTIVA has not been established as the cause. SUSTIVA should not be taken with Hismanal® (astemizole), Propulsid® (cisapride), Versed® (midazolam), Halcion® (triazolam) or ergot derivatives. Tell your doctor about any medications or herbal products (particularly St. John's wort) that you are taking. Women should not become pregnant or breast-feed while taking SUSTIVA.

Please see important information about SUSTIVA on adjacent page.

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efavirenz

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V4-H0011 02/02

℞ ONLY

PATIENT INFORMATION

SUSTIVA®* (sus-TEE-vah)

[efavirenz (eh-FAH-vih-rehnz)] capsules and tablets

ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with SUSTIVA.

Please also read the section **"MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH SUSTIVA."**

Read this information before you start taking SUSTIVA. Read it again each time you refill your prescription, in case there is any new information. This leaflet provides a summary about SUSTIVA and does not include everything there is to know about your medicine. This information is not meant to take the place of talking with your doctor.

What is SUSTIVA?

SUSTIVA is a medicine used in combination with other medicines to help treat infection with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). SUSTIVA is a type of anti-HIV drug called a "non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor" (NNRTI).

SUSTIVA works by lowering the amount of HIV in the blood (viral load). SUSTIVA must be taken with other anti-HIV medicines. When taken with other anti-HIV medicines, SUSTIVA has been shown to reduce viral load and increase the number of CD4 cells, a type of immune cell in blood. SUSTIVA may not have these effects in every patient.

SUSTIVA does not cure HIV or AIDS. People taking SUSTIVA may still develop other infections and complications. Therefore, it is very important that you stay under the care of your doctor.

SUSTIVA has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others. Therefore, continue to practice safe sex, and do not use or share dirty needles.

What are the possible side effects of SUSTIVA?

Serious psychiatric problems. A small number of patients experience severe depression, strange thoughts, or angry behavior while taking SUSTIVA. Some patients have thoughts of suicide and a few have actually committed suicide. These problems tend to occur more often in patients who have had mental illness. Contact your doctor right away if you think you are having these psychiatric symptoms, so your doctor can decide if you should continue to take SUSTIVA.

Common side effects. Many patients have dizziness, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, trouble concentrating, and/or unusual dreams during treatment with SUSTIVA. These side effects may be reduced if you take SUSTIVA at bedtime on an empty stomach. They also tend to go away after you have taken the medicine for a few weeks. If you have these common side effects, such as dizziness, it does not mean that you will also have serious psychiatric problems, such as severe depression, strange thoughts, or angry behavior. Tell your doctor right away if any of these side effects continue or if they bother you. It is possible that these symptoms may be more severe if SUSTIVA is used with alcohol or mood altering (street) drugs.

If you are dizzy, have trouble concentrating, or are drowsy, avoid activities that may be dangerous, such as driving or operating machinery.

Rash is common. Rashes usually go away without any change in treatment. In a small number of patients, rash may be serious. If you develop a rash, call your doctor right away. **Rash may be a serious problem in some children.** Tell your child's doctor right away if you notice rash or any other side effects while your child is taking SUSTIVA.

Other common side effects include tiredness, upset stomach, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Changes in body fat. Changes in body fat develop in some patients taking anti-HIV medicine. These changes may include an increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), in the breasts, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these fat changes are not known.

Tell your doctor or healthcare provider if you notice any side effects while taking SUSTIVA.

Contact your doctor before stopping SUSTIVA because of side effects or for any other reason.

This is not a complete list of side effects possible with SUSTIVA. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for a more complete list of side effects of SUSTIVA and all the medicines you will take.

How should I take SUSTIVA (efavirenz)?

General Information

- You should take SUSTIVA on an empty stomach, preferably at bedtime.
- Swallow SUSTIVA with water.
- Taking SUSTIVA with food increases the amount of medicine in your body, which may increase the frequency of side effects.
- Taking SUSTIVA at bedtime may make some side effects less bothersome.
- SUSTIVA must be taken in combination with other anti-HIV medicines. If you take only SUSTIVA, the medicine may stop working.
- Do not miss a dose of SUSTIVA. If you forget to take SUSTIVA, take the missed dose right away, unless it is almost time for your next dose. Do not double the next dose. Carry on with your regular dosing schedule. If you need help in planning the best times to take your medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- Take the exact amount of SUSTIVA your doctor prescribes. Never change the dose on your own. Do not stop this medicine unless your doctor tells you to stop.
- If you believe you took more than the prescribed amount of SUSTIVA, contact your local Poison Control Center or emergency room right away.
- Tell your doctor if you start any new medicine or change how you take old ones. Your doses may need adjustment.
- When your SUSTIVA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to SUSTIVA and become harder to treat.
- Your doctor may want to do blood tests to check for certain side effects while you take SUSTIVA.

Capsules

- The dose of SUSTIVA capsules for adults is 600 mg (three 200 mg capsules, taken together) once a day by mouth. The dose of SUSTIVA for children may be lower (see **Can children take SUSTIVA?**).

Tablets

- The dose of SUSTIVA tablets for adults is 600 mg (one tablet) once a day by mouth.

Can children take SUSTIVA?

Yes, children who are able to swallow capsules can take SUSTIVA. Rash may be a serious problem in some children. Tell your child's doctor right away if you notice rash or any other side effects while your child is taking SUSTIVA. The dose of SUSTIVA for children may be lower than the dose for adults. Capsules containing lower doses of SUSTIVA are available. Your child's doctor will determine the right dose based on your child's weight.

Who should not take SUSTIVA?

Do not take SUSTIVA if you are allergic to the active ingredient, efavirenz, or to any of the inactive ingredients. Your doctor and pharmacist have a list of the inactive ingredients.

What should I avoid while taking SUSTIVA?

- **Women taking SUSTIVA should not become pregnant.** Serious birth defects have been seen in animals treated with SUSTIVA. It is not known whether this could happen in humans. **Tell your doctor right away if you are pregnant.** Also talk with your doctor if you want to become pregnant.
- Women should not rely only on hormone-based birth control, such as pills, injections, or implants, because SUSTIVA may make these contraceptives ineffective. Women must use a reliable form of barrier contraception, such as a condom or diaphragm, even if they also use other methods of birth control.
- **Do not breast-feed if you are taking SUSTIVA.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that mothers with HIV not breast-feed because they can pass the HIV through their milk to the baby. Also, SUSTIVA may pass through breast milk and cause serious harm to the baby. Talk with your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You may need to stop breast-feeding or use a different medicine.
- Taking SUSTIVA with alcohol or other medicines causing similar side effects as SUSTIVA, such as drowsiness, may increase those side effects.
- Do not take any other medicines without checking with your doctor. These medicines include prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal products, especially St. John's wort.

Before using SUSTIVA, tell your doctor if you

- **have problems with your liver, or have hepatitis.** Your doctor may want to do tests to check your liver while you take SUSTIVA.
- **have ever had mental illness or are using drugs or alcohol.**

What important information should I know about taking other medicines with SUSTIVA (efavirenz)?

SUSTIVA may change the effect of other medicines, including ones for HIV, and cause serious side effects. Your doctor may change your other medicines or change their doses. Other medicines, including herbal products, may affect SUSTIVA. For this reason, **it is very important to:**

- Let all your doctors and pharmacists know that you take SUSTIVA.
- Tell your doctors and pharmacists about all medicines you take. This includes those you buy over-the-counter and herbal or natural remedies.

Bring all your prescription and non-prescription medicines as well as any herbal remedies that you are taking when you see a doctor, or make a list of their names, how much you take, and how often you take them. This will give your doctor a complete picture of the medicines you use. Then he or she can decide the best approach for your situation.

Taking SUSTIVA with St. John's wort *(hypericum perforatum)*, an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort is not recommended. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or are planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease SUSTIVA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to SUSTIVA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV drugs.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH SUSTIVA

The following medicines may cause serious and life-threatening side effects when taken with SUSTIVA. You should not take any of these medicines while taking SUSTIVA**:

- Hismanal® (astemizole)
- Propulsid® (cisapride)
- Versed® (midazolam)
- Halcion® (triazolam)
- Ergot medications (for example, Wigraine® and Cafergot®)

The following medicines may need to be replaced with another medicine when taken with SUSTIVA**:

- Fortovase®, Invirase® (saquinavir)
- Biaxin® (clarithromycin)

The following medicines may need to have their dose changed when taken with SUSTIVA**:

- Crixivan® (indinavir)
- Mycobutin® (rifabutin)
- Methadone

These are not all the medicines that may cause problems if you take SUSTIVA. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medicines that you take.

General advice about SUSTIVA:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use SUSTIVA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give SUSTIVA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

Keep SUSTIVA at room temperature (77°F) in the bottle given to you by your pharmacist. The temperature can range from 59° to 86°F.

Keep SUSTIVA out of the reach of children.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about SUSTIVA. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your pharmacist or doctor for the full prescribing information about SUSTIVA, or you can visit the SUSTIVA website at http://www.sustiva.com or call 1-800-426-7644.

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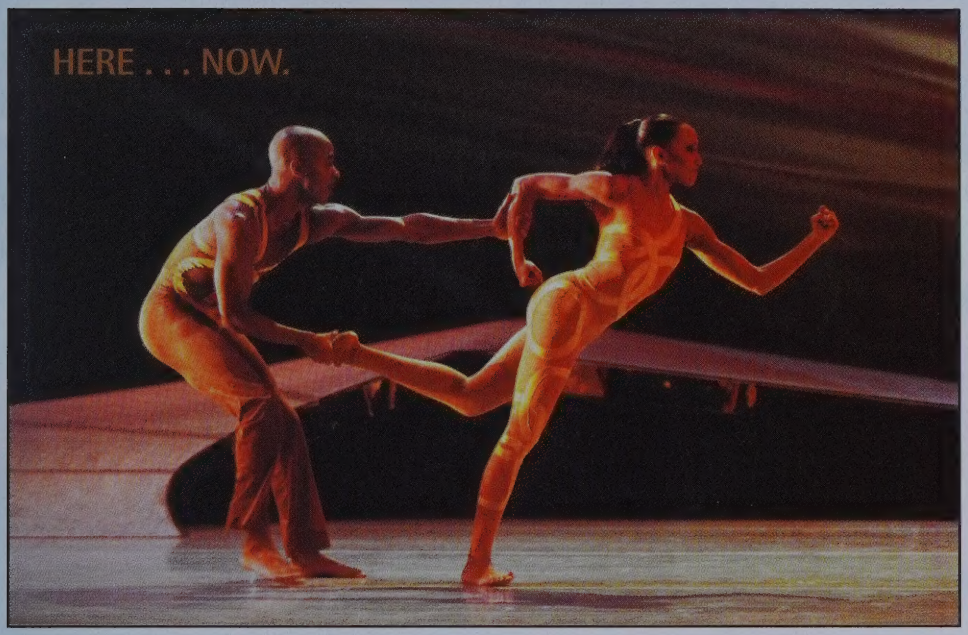
T4-B001B-2-02

6495-06
Revised February 2002

a dance for FloJo

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 43rd season premiered Judith Jamison's *HERE .... NOW.*, with an original score by Wynton Marsalis. The ballet was commissioned by the 2002 Cultural Olympiad of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Games.

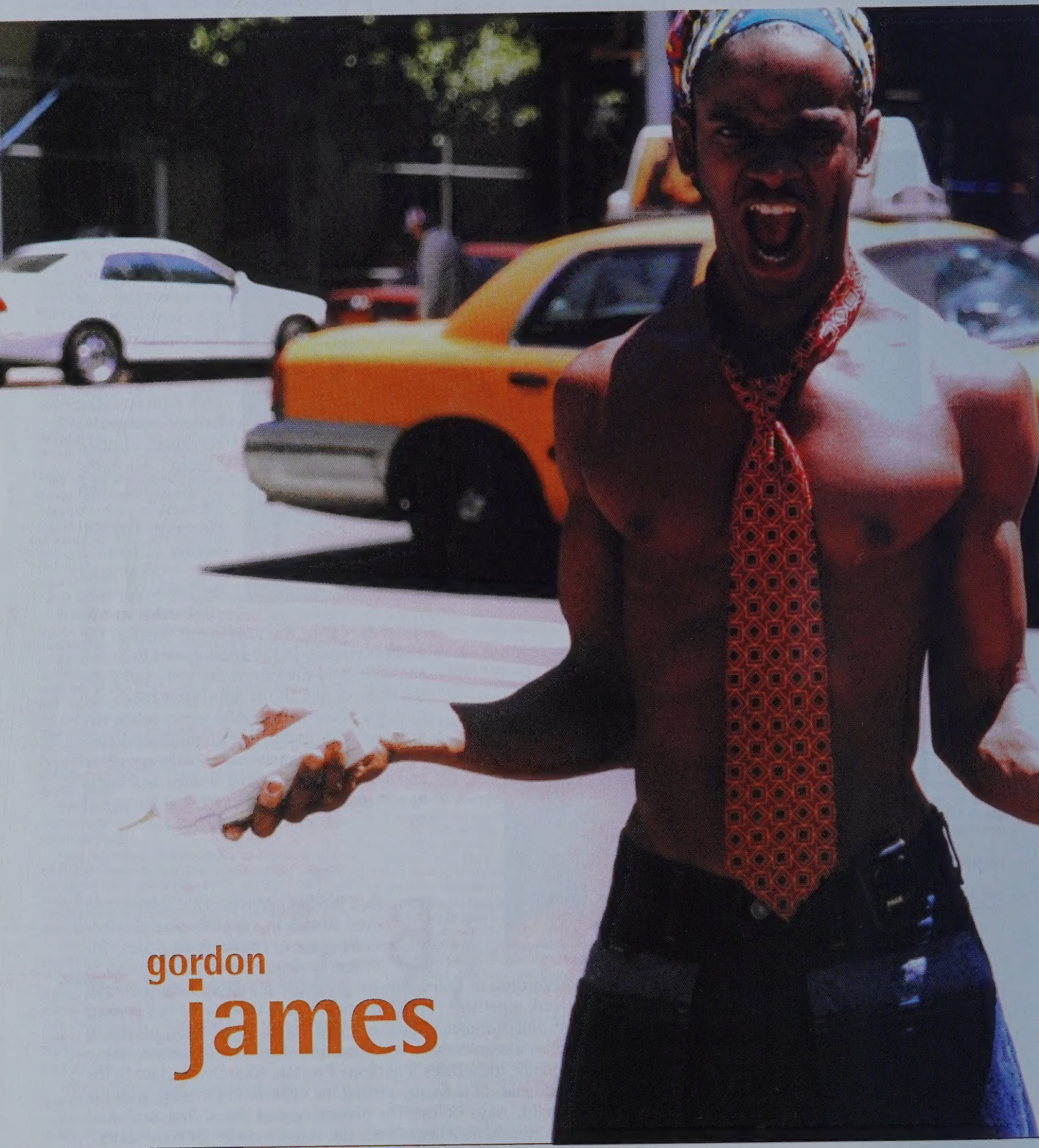


HERE ... NOW. takes inspiration from iconic athlete Florence Griffith Joyner. Dance, athleticism, and art merge in this new work that captures the essence of perseverance, stamina, and grace shared by both athletes and dancers. The ballet features five sections entitled "*Speed*," "*Strength*," "*Style*," "*Pain*," and "*Heaven*."

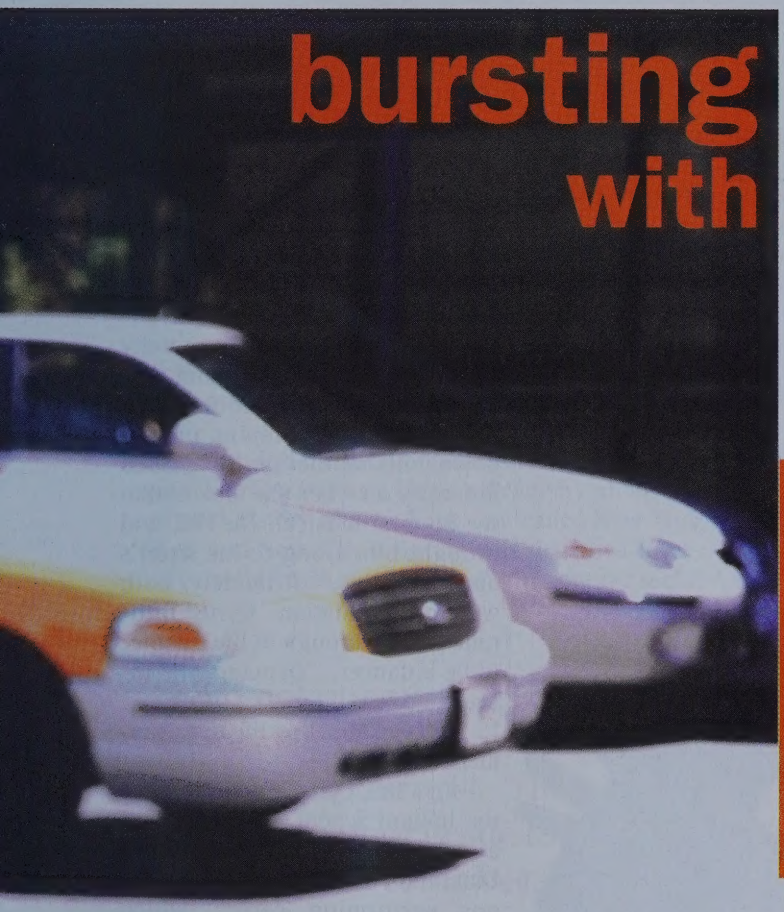
Florence Griffith Joyner ("Flojo"), once considered the fastest woman on Earth, won a silver medal in the 200-meter dash in the 1984 Olympics. In the 1988 games in Seoul, she won gold medals in the 100- and 200-meter races and in the 400-meter relay; she took the silver in the 1600-meter relay. Her prowess, along with her glamour and eye-catching clothes, made her a media sensation and a sports icon to young women aspiring to be athletes. Joyner died in 1998 at the age of 39.

the 'Mistahs' are doin' it for themselves.

Black lesbian playwrites are telling their own stories in small theatre productions coast to coast. A new play, *The Office*, by denise Coles, AKA Mistah, is an example of the success they are having. According to Coles, theatre goers are promised a hardy laugh and a great show. "When gays and straights work together---things happen," says Coles, who has penned her second production for an off Broadway run this summer. Coles' original drama, *The Family*, played to sold out audiences. Coles, who also directs the play, has assemble a seasoned cast of community actors, many of whom starred in her first production. They include Ira Jeffries, Zanthony Preston, Nico Uviera, Lisa S, Iris Rivera, and Franco, "all fantastic---all alumni," she said. "I'm finally getting the opportunity to work with the distinguished Cheryl McClendon [pictured above(l)]," says Coles. The diverse cast of 'fems,' 'butches' and 'queens' is rounded out by promising newcomer, Rhoshena Allen. Check the *Venus* website for show dates.



gordon james



bursting out with poetry

one-man sensation shares the gift of love by way of several characters

words by Walter Greene

"The taxi poem really hits a nerve with all of the Black men in the audience. I am constantly thrilled by Black men telling me that was `their' story. That's what thrills me about what I do, it makes all my work worthwhile."

He's definitely easy on the eyes, oozing flavors of a cute "papi chulo." I am talking about the real Gordon James and not any of the 20 characters that he channels in his one -man show, which he describes as a "One-Man Multipoemonologue." This dynamic young actor served as MC for the recent *Venus* magazine cover launch in New York and teased the audience with a taste of his show entitled *OUTbursts*.

James eases into his characters with a fierce attitude of confidence and realism. You actually feel Trent, the guy on the train, and as the show progresses, one becomes totally enveloped in his poem titled "'Sup, Nigga." "I wrote these poems not knowing that they would impact people the way they did," revealed James in an exclusive for *Venus*. "It's all meaningful to them, and that's impactful to me. That, I think, is all divine intervention. The irony of it all is that I hate to write. I loathe writing; that's why I know it's something coming through me. What I write and perform has nothing to do with personal experiences nor is it autobiographica. I look back and think I must be possessed."

A native of Kingston, Jamaica, James has lived in Canada, Kenya, and the U.S., based on his father's work with Colgate-Palmolive in the international business arena. He graduated from Dartmouth College where he was an active member of the Black Underground Theatre Association. He received his MFA in Acting from Brooklyn College and has performed leading roles in productions like *Six Degrees of Seperation, The Island,* and *The Colored Museum*. It was during his stint with *The Colored Museum* that the acting/writing situation really hit home. "George C.Wolfe stands out as the one person that influenced me. It was his writing of *The Colored Museum* that made me realize that you can put together words and stories in that manner."

continued on page 85

teach the children dance

words by Charmaine Warren

duane cyrus

The soft-spoken dancer/choreographer Duane Cyrus is committed to passing on the torch by educating young ones. "The cycle of nurturing our children with what our parents gave us ... [is] ... instinct," he insists. Though initially his father did not understand why he began studying dance at age 17, describing it as "jumping up and down," his mother gently guided him early on when she took him to see his first musical, *The Wiz*, and brought him along to his sister's dance lessons. Ultimately, both were his foundation. Cyrus' fortitude comes through in life's choice to be a dancer. "Dancing," he intones,
"... is like channeling life to the audience."

In 1988, Cyrus graduated from the Julliard School with the help of a scholarship from the Aaron Diamond Foundation. His illustrious performing career, which began soon after, includes working with Gallman's Newark Dance Theater (GNDT), the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the Martha Graham Dance Company, and as an original cast member of London's *Lion King*. Equally significant, are his solo dance concerts titled *The Black Male* and *Dancing A Dream*.

Barring this prestige, this gentle giant, tall, yet small in stature, and at the beginnings of a head of locks, credits his mentor Alfred Gallman of GNDT who "... has been guiding students to successful academic and professional careers. I recognize the importance of this nurturing [from] experience," he maintains, "[and] ... felt I should give it back."

VENUS: What would you say triggered you wanting to work with children?
DC: I was able to travel and see different parts of the world, [and] realized that [our] wealthy nation educate our young, and care for our older citizens poorly. This made me want to educate the young who will eventually take care of me.

VENUS: Talk about your work with community outreach and arts-in-education programs.
DC: I worked with the Museum of the City of New York and Circuit Productions to develop a program for Manhattan's Harbor Academy about the cultural history of New York City called New York Then and Now. The program was designed to involve children in the arts [through] popular social dances, ballet and modern. [Additionally], they explore fashion, design, music and theater with other teachers. [In the end], they created their own dances and artwork.

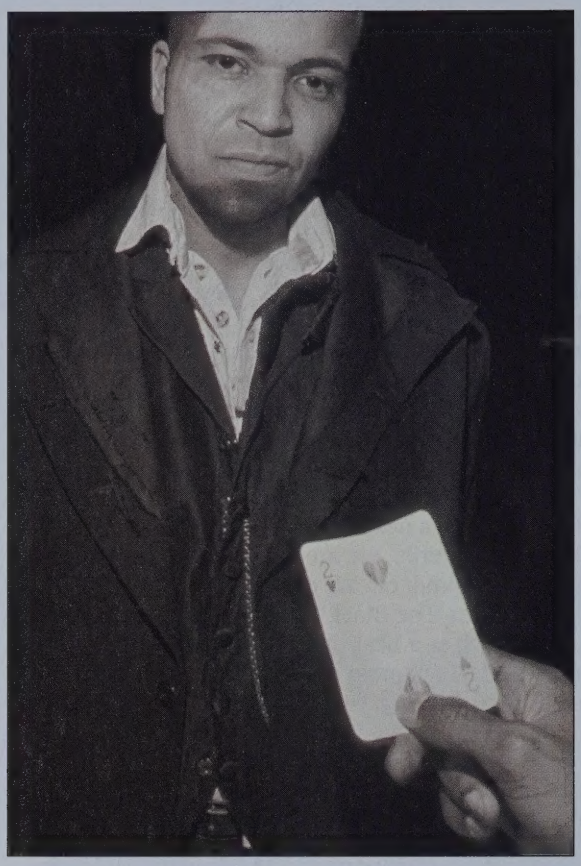
VENUS: How did Cyrus Art Production come about?
DC: As an independent artist I have different responsibilities well beyond being artistic, [and] formed Cyrus Art Production to encompass the different projects that inspire me. The organization is small; I am able to provide some employment for others periodically. I made the name legal one year ago, and it has been very rewarding to be this independent.

VENUS: Education in the arts is not necessarily a financially viable outlet, so tell us what keeps you coming back to the children.
DC: I did not pursue the arts for any financial reason. The fact that it is not financially viable, [however], may be one of the reasons I think children should be exposed to the arts. They should get the message early that money would be a poor guide to follow when making life decisions—better to let the money come because you followed your dreams. Most things children are taught focus on financial viability, or "having the most," while leaving so many other necessary life skills out of focus.

VENUS: What's next for Cyrus Art Production?
DC: Primarily, we are looking for more exposure for our products. We continue to push the book, Vital Grace - The Black Male Dancer, which I co-authored. It is a beautiful photography book with images of Black male dancers by Joanne Savio. I am finishing [the] first draft of a collaborative dance/film project with Black British artist, Dalh Haynes, called A Venus Study (believe it!) [which] looks at the concept of the female body as Venus, specifically Di Milo, Hottentot, Willendorf and Boticelli. We used the often-distorted image of women in art and media as an inspiration for the film. I would like to see the concept grow, keep[ing] me and other creative people employed with some degree of security.

VENUS: What's next for the dancer/choreographer/teacher of the youth?
DC: This spring, the Joffrey/New School in Manhattan will premiere one of my dances. I will also teach modern for American Ballet Theater's Summer Intensive. I plan to continue choreographing, teaching and developing projects in New York and abroad. I want to grow as an individual along with my company. The more I grow, the more I can give back.

"I did not pursue the arts for any financial reason. The fact that it is not financially viable may be one of the reasons I think children should be exposed to the arts. They should get the message early that money would be a poor guide to follow when making life decisions—better to let the money come because you followed your dreams."



topdog

Broadway's new pet

review by Alaric Blair

When there are two African-American biological bothers struggling to eek out an existence in a metropolitan city not unlike New York, tensions and tempers are bound to run hot. However, when these quotidian vicissitudes of ghetto life are married to humor and the light-hearted, one finds poverty a bit more palatable—less "Les Miz."

Playwright Suzan Lori-Parks, who won a Pulitzer prize for before the ink could dry on this review, has given Broadway and the world a new play to talk about and reflect upon. *Topdog/Underdog* (now playing at New York's Ambassador Theater) is a two-man show staring Jeffery Wright (Lincoln) and Mos Def (Booth) that center around two brothers living in cramped quarters in the present time, dealing with their individual and shared demons. One brother hosts his demons in alcohol while the other in sexual conquests.

The one-liners were so funny that the players often had to wait for the laughter to subside in order to finish their next lines. The players exhibit excellent timing and great theatrical rapport, making this play a real success.

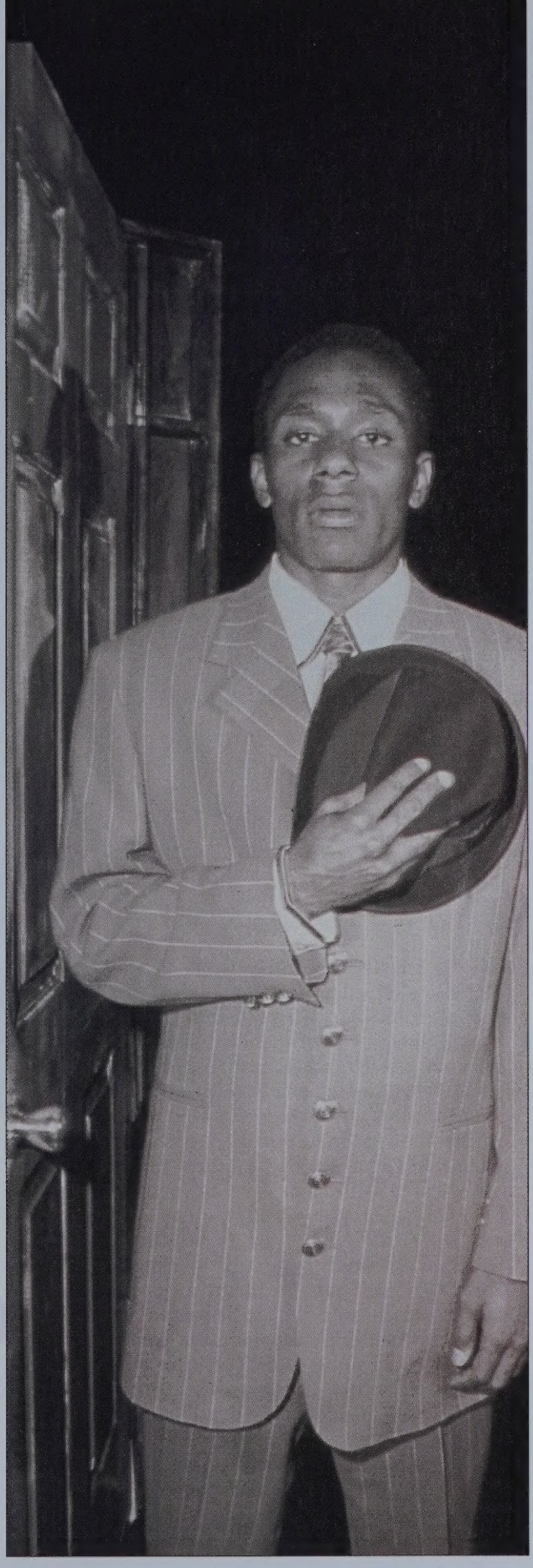
Lori-Parks used a character from her acclaimed stage production, *The America Play* (1998), for *Topdog*. Lincoln had been employed by an arcade to play the role of Abraham Lincoln in the re-enactment of the 16th president's assassination. *Topdog* features the same character but with a dizzying spin on his personal life.

The audience loves this play. The one-liners were so funny that the players often had to wait for the laughter to subside in order to finish their next lines. The players exhibit excellent timing and great theatrical rapport, making this play a real success. In addition to the piquant humor, there is a graver side to this play that theatergoers might easily overlook. These brothers use their one-room environment to hash out family issues, drink, plan their next hustle, and (of course) argue.

Their most pressing concern seems financial at first: A one-room, sparsely furnished tenement shows the audience at what level of disadvantage these brothers are living. The kleptomania and womanizing of the younger brother (Booth) are yet other indications of skewed morality. The older brother (Lincoln) had once been the "be-all-end-all" of the street hustlers. His hustle of choice was three-card Monte—a game where deception and quick hands win the day and the money.

Lincoln, who has decided to "give up the cards," had once thought to pass on his magic touch to his younger brother but decides that he wants something better for Booth. In his own way, he attempts (on numerous occasions) to dissuade Booth from following in his footsteps.

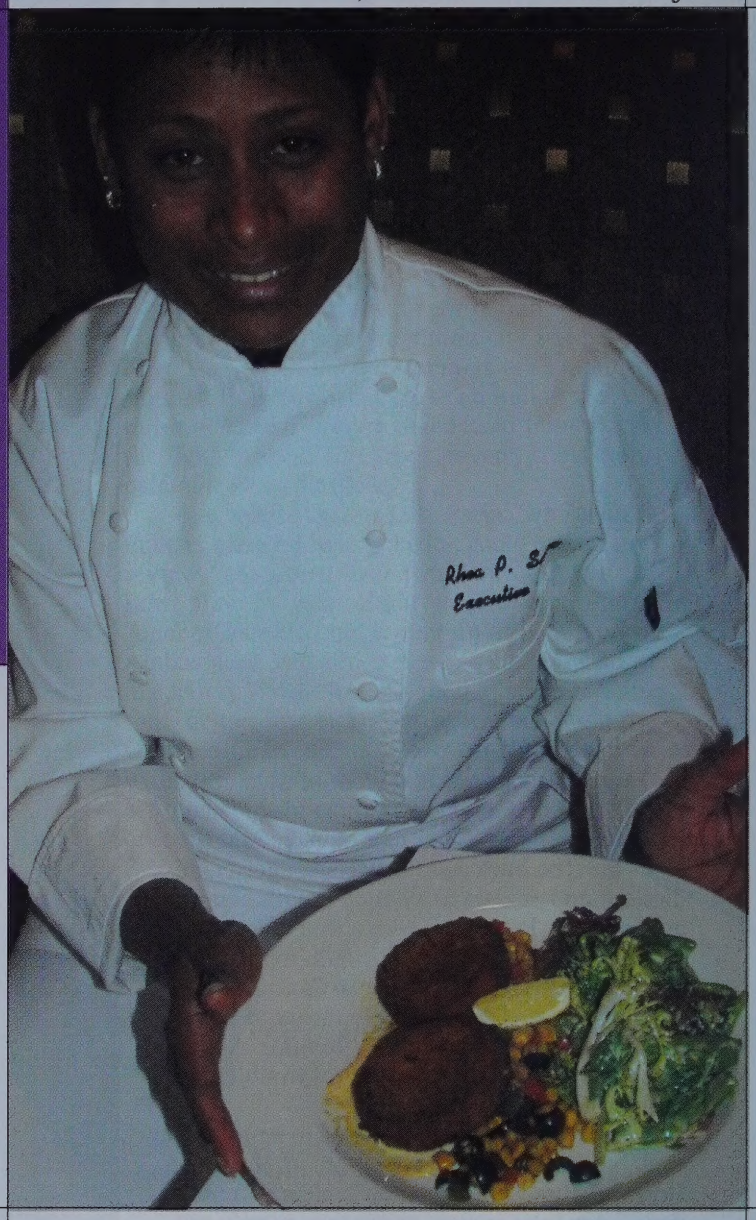
He recalls the friends lost and the "on-the-lam" lifestyle that has recently cost him his wife and family and has plunged him deeper into the bottle. It is no coincidence that these brothers are named after two historical characters—Abraham Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth (his assassin). The underpinning of the badinage between them is adversarial and potentially lethal.



Topdog is a useful piece of theater that addresses the issues that plague many African-American men in America. The intricacies of racism, ageism, addiction, and sexism are handled with acumen as Lori-Parks lays a plot with a thin crust of humor (both physical and implied) on top of a storyline rift with deeper emotional concerns. Just beneath the surface of what appears to be another episode of any other popular Africa-American sitcom, is a cauldron of troubles that each brother has to face.

The design of the play seems to be to paint each brother as having the potential of being a "topdog" though they are both clearly "underdogs." Are they victims or are they merely participants in some twisted version of "manifest destiny?" Lincoln lives in constant fear of being replaced at the arcade by a "wax dummy," and Booth lives to beat the streets at its game and conquer as many women in the process. This is not to oversimplify the undertones of this play but to merely provide some sort of cultural rubric–some frame of reference–from which the theatergoer can pull. Wright (most recognizable as Martin Luther King, Jr. in the HBO special *Boycott*) proves his versatility and aplomb in the role of Lincoln. Mos Def, recently sited in *Monster's Ball*, gives an equally believable performance.

Topdog/Underdog is a must-see, . . . not only for its artistic quality and brilliant acting, but also for its far-reaching cultural significance.



Executive Chef
Rhea P. Smith

get back to your roots at The Soul Café

Ms. Fishe and The New Groove rock The Soul Café.

"We like to call it the rebirth of cool dining," says owner Alain Kei BoGuinard, who is originally from the Ivory Coast. "We set out to make it feel like the Harlem Renaissance."

Black patrons of the theater looking for a hearty, home-like meal after a Broadway show often find few options in the Theater District and neighboring Times Square. Many of the area's restaurants are more like arcades, and even more still have unwelcoming hosts or bland, unfamiliar entrees–the kind that leave you longing for a plate of yams or chicken after eating a three-course meal. It's like there's a lack of character, or charm, or what folks tend to call "soul."

One break in the chain of monotony is the Soul Café, a 7-year-old member of Manhattan's finest black restaurants, and also the site of *Venus*' recent cover/relaunch party. Co-owned by actor Malik Yoba, Soul Café offers good food and great service in an upscale, classy environment that meshes influences from America and Africa. Its refined but relaxed atmosphere makes it a favorite of many celebrities (including Bill Cosby, Tyra Banks, and many more), adult professionals and trendy young adults. And it's not just the dining. The restaurant's bar and nightly performances make Soul Café the right place to entertain out-of-town guests, first dates, business clients, or best buds.

Soul Café sits on the right side of 42nd Street between 9th and 10th avenues. It's close to a few off-Broadway shows, including the notoriously merry *Puppetry of the Penis*. Wide picture windows hint at Soul Café's fairly large space (it holds 300) and introduce the soothing mahogany, sand and brick-colored palette. Inside, a graceful host welcomes diners at the podium, from where they can see nearly all of the restaurant at once. The bar extends from the immediate left, leading to two plush lounge areas. A small stage is at the immediate right, with the wide dining room sitting on a raised platform. It completes the remaining section of the restaurant's right side. Industrial metal accoutrements like the massive chandelier in the front lounge add character; velvet curtains complement the natural color scheme. Finally, African artwork seals Soul Café as one of New York's leading caterers of the new-school soul-food experience.

"We like to call it the rebirth of cool dining," says owner Alain Kei BoGuinard, who is originally from the Ivory Coast. "We set out to make it feel like the Harlem Renaissance." Friends from the famed Spago in L.A. inspired BoGuinard to begin his own enterprise.

Getting There:

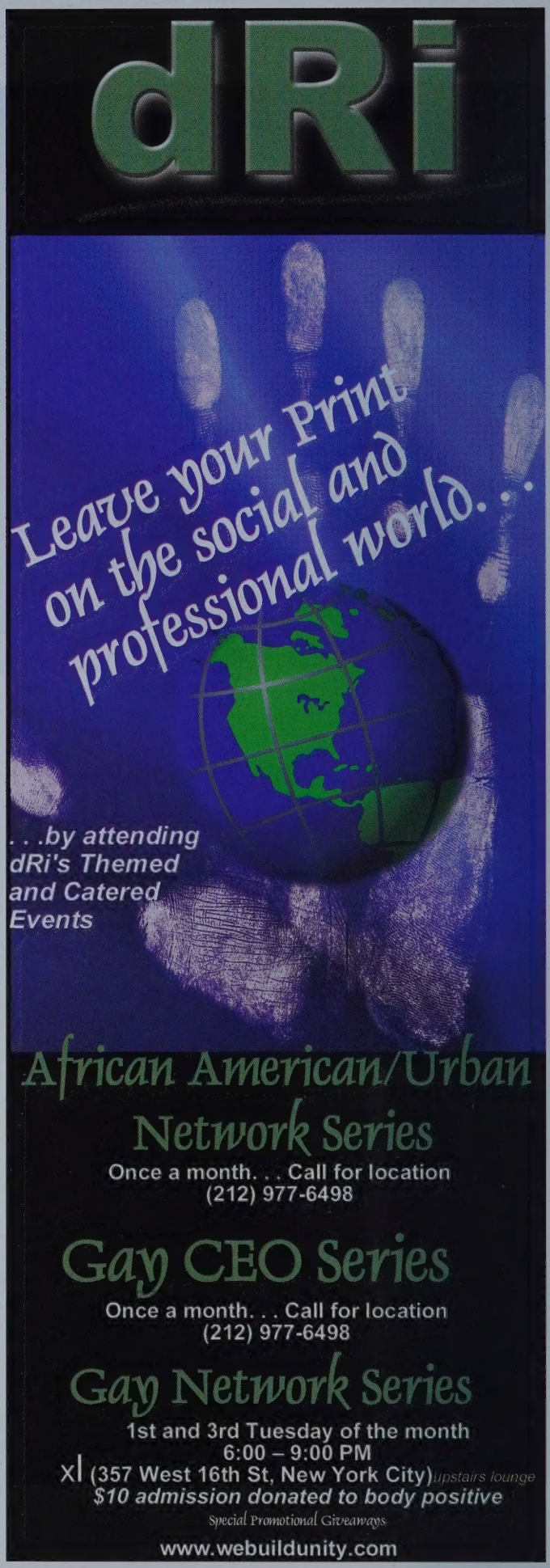
The Soul Café is located at 444 W. 42nd St, New York City. 212/244-7685. Reservations are recommended. Lunch Tues.-Fri. 11:30-3 p.m., Dinner Mon.-Thurs. 5:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and Fri./Sat. until 12:30 a.m. Gospel Brunch Sundays 11:30-3 p.m. Entertainment most evenings. Private parties by request. www.soulcaferestaurant.com

"Expect fresh, filling entrees and appetizers prepared with care. Specialties include all the soul food standards: pork chops, ribs, fried chicken, etc. Other goodies include the jumbo Maryland blue crab cakes and Nana's potpie, with a flaky, golden crust done just right."

He paired with Chef Rhea B. Smith, trained in Trinidad, and the menu was born, literally, reflecting the flavor of the diaspora. Soul Café was rated as the best soul food spot in Manhattan by Zagat's in 1999.

Expect fresh, filling entrees and appetizers prepared with care. Specialties include all the soul food standards: pork chops, ribs, fried chicken, etc. Other goodies include the jumbo Maryland blue crab cakes and Nana's potpie, with a flaky, golden crust done just right. Typically, a meal with a cocktail costs about $39. Penny pinchers beware though—every party at the table must order an entrée (priced between $16-$28), and if you happen to be double dating, a 17 percent gratuity is included with the bill. Service is great: The staff is attentive and friendly, though potentially terse in case of menu substitutions. Likewise when Soul Café has special events (nightly after 10 p.m.), patrons must pay a cover charge, which varies depending on the act. (Nightly events include a talent search on Tuesdays and live jazz on Thursdays.) But hey, if you want to roll with the in crowd, you gotta play by the rules. It's best to just relax, sample from the fine wine list, mingle among the city's dashing and fetching, enjoy a performance, and eat a memorable, soulful meal. If you can't make it to the flagship eatery in New York, look for franchises to open soon in D.C. and Atlanta.

–M. Venable



Lambrini

Skyy Blue
storms through the night

This spring, as your nights heat up, stay cool with SKYY Blue, a hot new drink with a crisp, citrus taste and natural flavors containing SKYY Vodka. Served in its trademark sleek blue bottle, SKYY Blue is the perfect beverage choice when beer is too casual and a mixed drink is too inconvenient. It tastes so good you'll want to take it home from the clubs—luckily it's available in six-packs, too.

Let's Get Out the Jigger

Are you still gleefully sipping the cocktails from the day you turned 21? Uh-huh, and you know who serves the tangiest Sour Apple Martini in town; you know the lyrics to every Sade tune worth drinking to, and you think a cocktail glass should win an award for architectural design. How nice. But do you know how to make a great daiquiri, martini or cosmopolitan? Probably not. Now don't get embarrassed. You're not alone here. Drink mixing isn't exactly a part of your regular routine as say pouring milk on Corn Flakes.

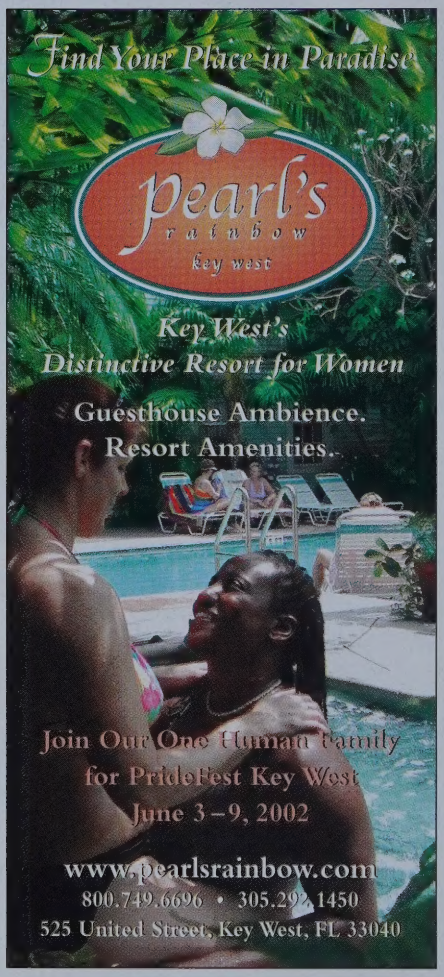
Drink mixing is one of the easiest and most enjoyable skills you can develop as an adult. Your talent will pay off as friends surround you, eager to benefit from your drink-making abilities. *The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Mixing Drinks* by Bev Bennet provides the basic information to get you on your way. Try mixing this recipe just for fun.

VODKA SOUR

An old favorite, the salty dog, a combination of gin or vodka and grapefruit juice, inspired this breathtaking zesty cocktail that's a play on trendy herb-seasoned drinks. Adjust sugar according to your taste.

1 tablespoon finely chopped mint leaves
1 lime wedge
Ice cubes
2 teaspoons superfine sugar
2 ounces (1/4 cup) vodka, chilled
1 ounce (2 tablespoons) fresh grapefruit juice
1 lime slice for garnish

In a shaker, combine mint leaves and lime wedge. Use a muddler to mash the mint with the lime. Fill shaker half full with ice. Add sugar, vodka, and grapefruit juice. Cover shaker and shake well. Strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with lime slice. Serves 1.



Sake to me now!

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Painting has given me wings to fly
Yes! soar across planes of reality vast and incredible
Amid terrains of beauty and abysses of fear
I am here
I study myself on the tip of my brush
So ready, so prepared to take flight
With the wings of my soul
Zenzele Browne

"I've learned that letting go of fear is what creativity demands of me."

Painting is a journey for Zenzele Browne of In the Light Fine Arts. "I give my whole self over to it, and I don't hold back," says the Philadelphia native, whose own body is a canvas of fabulous tattoos. "By doing so, I am blessed with the guidance of the muses and ancestors. We walk together."

Browne believes that being an artist requires sacrifice. But not, perhaps, the kind we might think. The sacrifice that she refers to here is giving up fear. "I've learned that letting go of fear is what creativity demands of me. When I let go, what occurs almost instantly is an embrace. That embrace is love. When I paint, I am in love."

In the Light Fine Art edition prints of her original paintings are available online at www.inthelightfinearts.com. Her gay love series, shown here, as well as her allegorical landscape series, are extremely beautiful and available as original oils. "I am also available for commissioned work," she says from her Manhattan studio. Prints are available in open, or limited signed and numbered Editions (16" X 20"). *For more info write In the Light Fine Art, P. O. Box 20650, New York, NY 10009*

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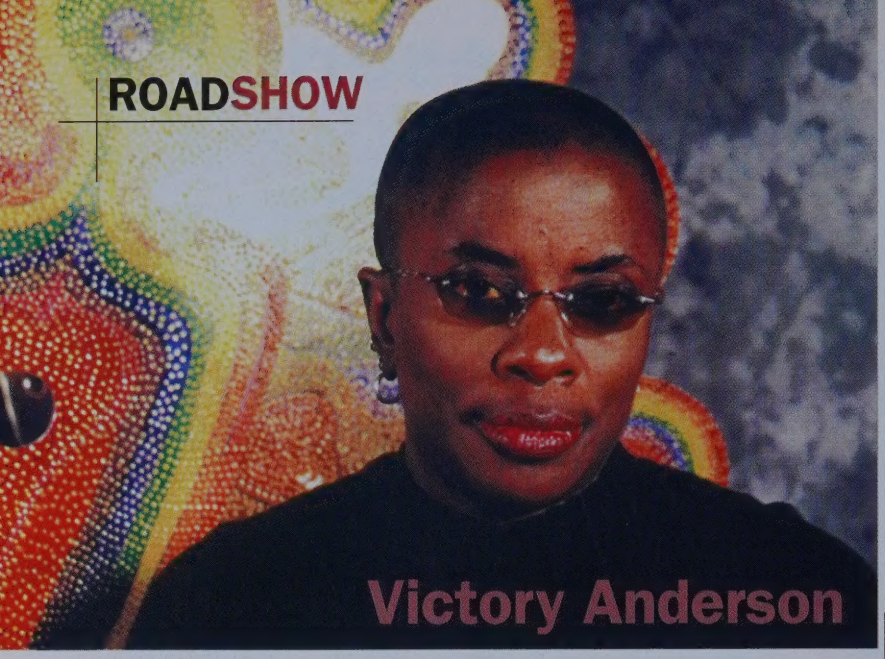
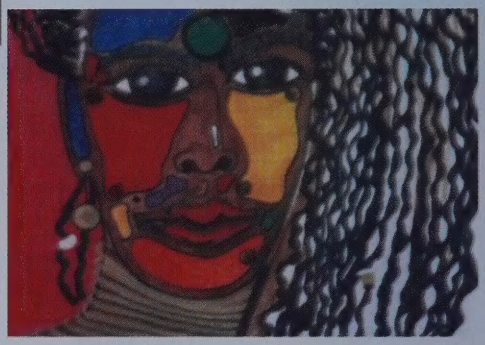


Victory Anderson

"I consider myself a storyteller, extending my hand and paintbrush to be a powerful force."

Born in Tulsa, Okla., visual artist Victory Anderson studied at the Myers School of Fine Art. "I consider myself a storyteller, extending my hand and paintbrush to be a powerful force in the universe," she says from her Los Angeles studio. Her work has been commissioned by Queen Latifah.

Victory was last summer's winner of the VENUS Body Painting contest at Malibu Beach during 'At The Beach' Black Pride. Her canvas for the day was model/actor/singer Jody Ray, whose one-man show you can catch the first Tuesday of each month in Hollywood on channel 43.



Lastingwish.com

new website showcases the heritage of African-American timelessness

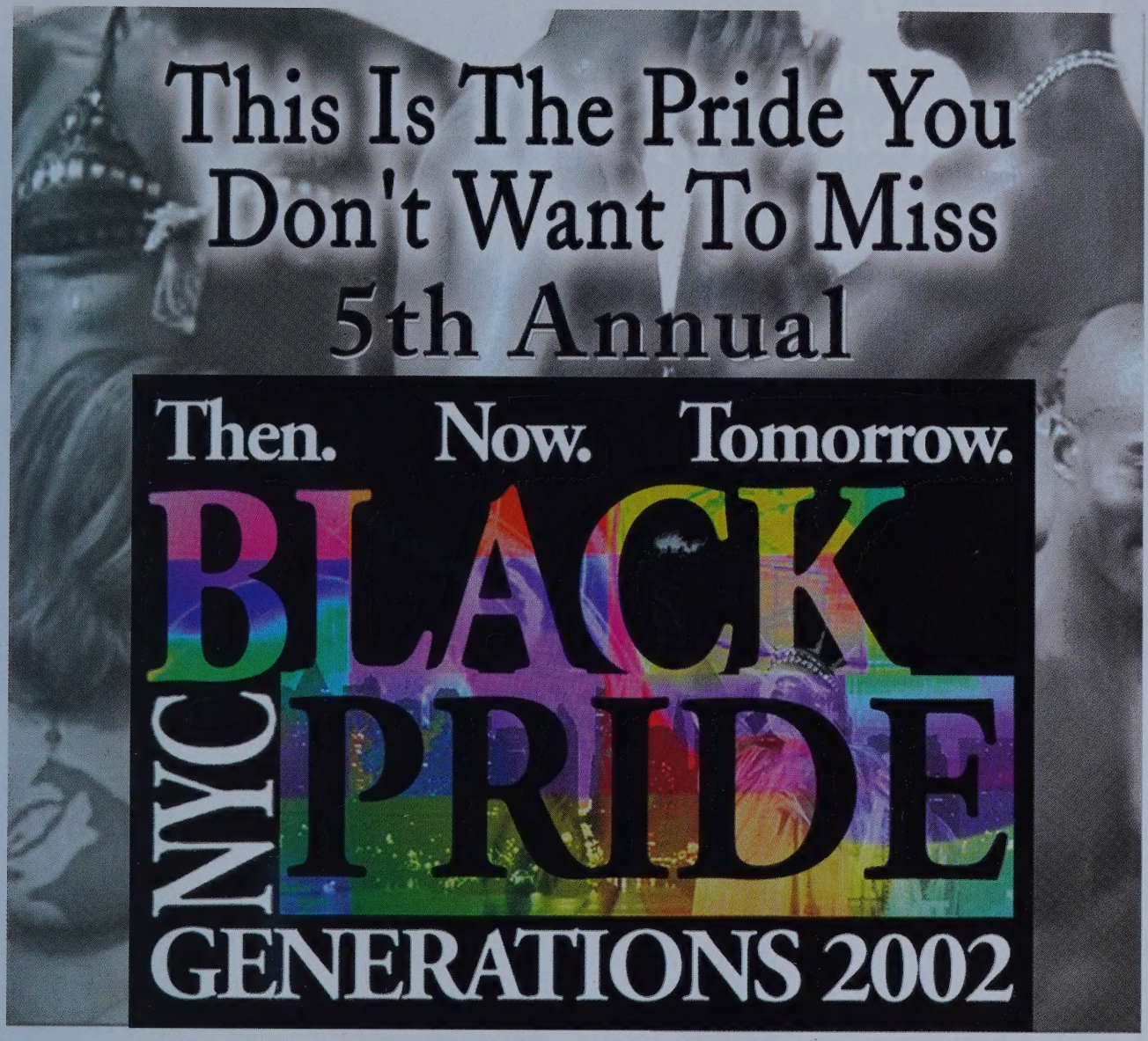
Lastingwish.com pays tribute to people who have passed on and left rich memories behind. The late Mrs. Roberta P. Webb defied all typical stereotypes of black women of the early 1900s. An independent woman born in 1907, she lived through the Great Depression, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, five wars, and 18 U.S. Presidents. In tribute to her 93-year life span and others like her, the LastingWish.com website was launched.

The site displays her rare collection of leather-bound books (circa 1892), Persian rugs, Limoges, and Wedgwood Cameo/Jasperware china, original vintage recordings including Al Jolson, Ziegfield Follies, and Chopin among others, antique furniture, over 100 photographs and postcards dating from the early 1900s through the new millennium. True to Webb's long, rich history and timelessness, proceeds from the sale of her museum collection will go to disadvantaged children allowing them to travel and attend artistic and cultural events.

A dynamic example of Webb's life was her relationship with a neighborhood child who, because of her dark skin complexion, could only use the back door of the house. Webb and her husband, Haywood, accepted the young woman and her children as their own.

The Webbs purchased their Philadelphia home in 1933 by living modestly and saving $10 a month. Webb, whose husband, Haywood, was a chauffeur for a prominent society, was also a seamstress who opened her own shop in the Empire Building in downtown Philadelphia during the 1960s. Her clients, mostly Caucasian, often became her friends, a testament to her honest, open character long before the Civil Rights Movement and integration.

For a Lasting Wish tribute page for your loved one and further information about the Lastingwish.com website, contact Jenny Bennett at jennym12@hotmail.com.



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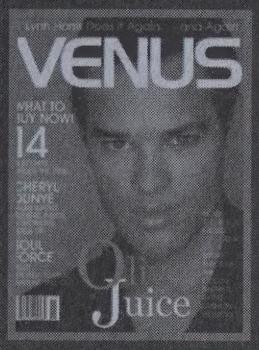

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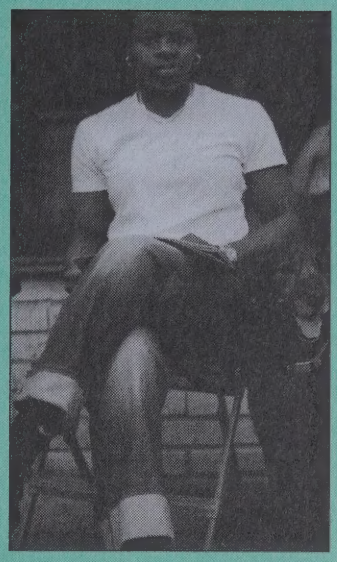

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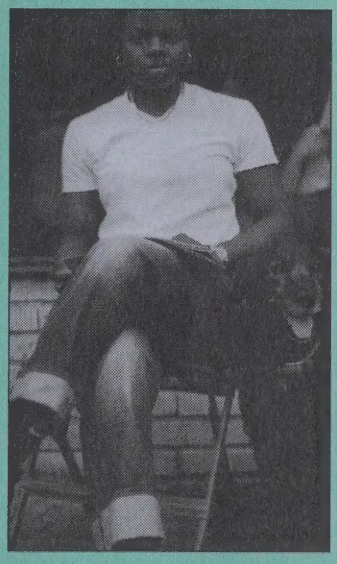

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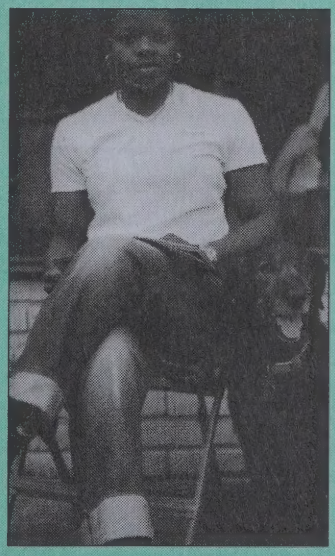

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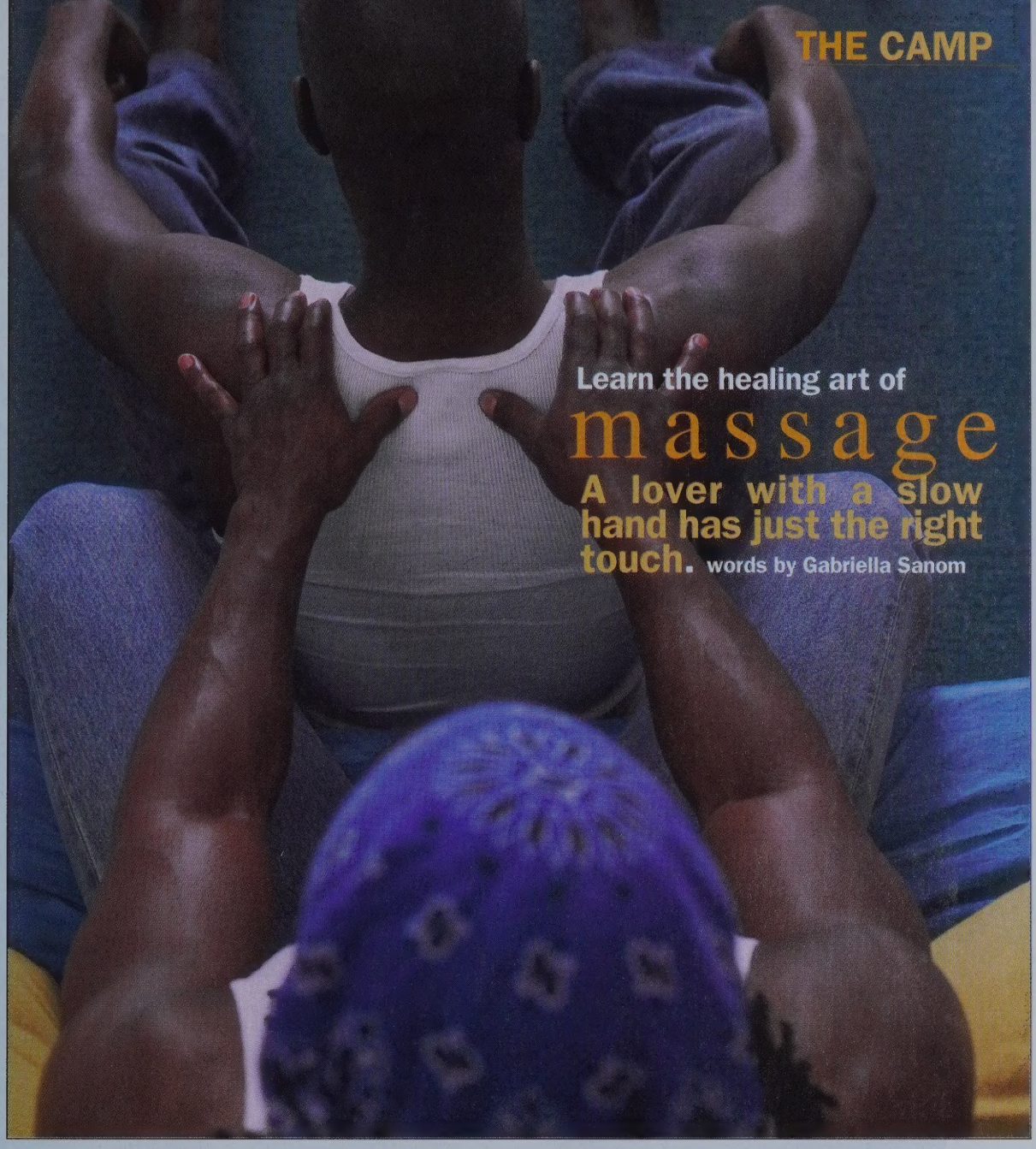


Learn the healing art of

massage

A lover with a slow hand has just the right touch. words by Gabriella Sanom

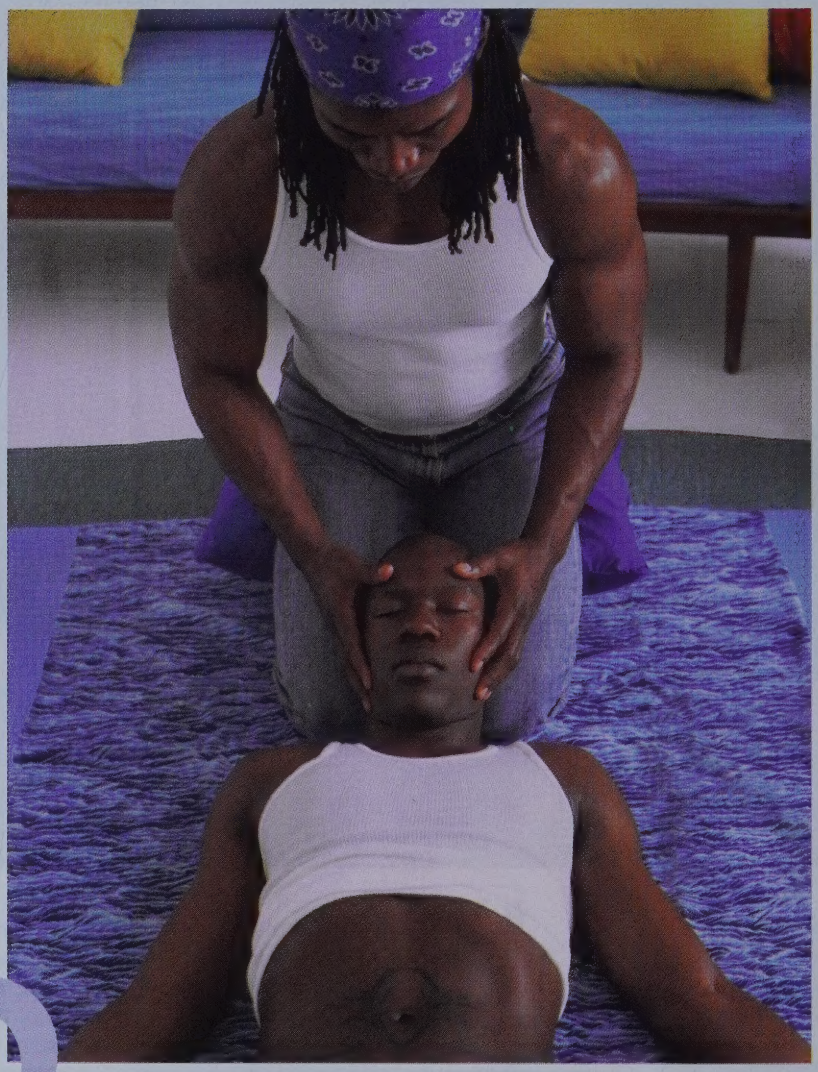
1 Neck and Shoulders

Sit comfortably upright on the sofa, with your partner seated on the floor in front of you. Grasp the muscles of his shoulders, with your thumbs pressing into the muscles between the shoulder blades, and gently shake, squeeze, knead. Apply specific pressure to sore spots with your thumbs or the heels of your hands. Grasp and knead the muscles on the back of your partner's neck, use your thumbs to press into the soft spaces where the head and neck meet, moving in circular motions.

Safe, affectionate touch is a basic necessity of life, but sadly, rare for most of us outside of the context of sex. Exchanging massage with your lover is a great way to fill that need and to experience a profound sense of connection and trust with your partner.

Massage can be as pleasurable for the giving partner as it is for the receiving partner. Massaging can be deeply meditative and relaxing; it puts you in touch with the tenderness and care you feel for your partner, it gives you an opportunity to behold the beauty of your lover's unique body. Massaging your lover allows you the satisfaction of giving a gift that feels good, that can alleviate aches and pains, and soothes away stress and tension. Your lover is likely to be in a great mood for quite a while after the massage session, and so are you.

In order to enjoy giving massage, it's very important that you are aware of how to use your body, especially your hands and thumbs. Using proper body mechanics will allow you to remain at ease, never feeling strain or discomfort during the session. Owning a massage table is great, and purchasing an inexpensive table is worth considering; however, massage can be given comfortably on a mat or soft carpet on the floor, or seated as the photos illustrate. Stay aware of your own body. Are you in a comfortable position? Is your body aligned and relaxed? Check the tension level in your shoulders and neck. Consciously release any tension you find. Are your knees bent to protect your lower back? Use a lunge position and use the power of your legs not your back.

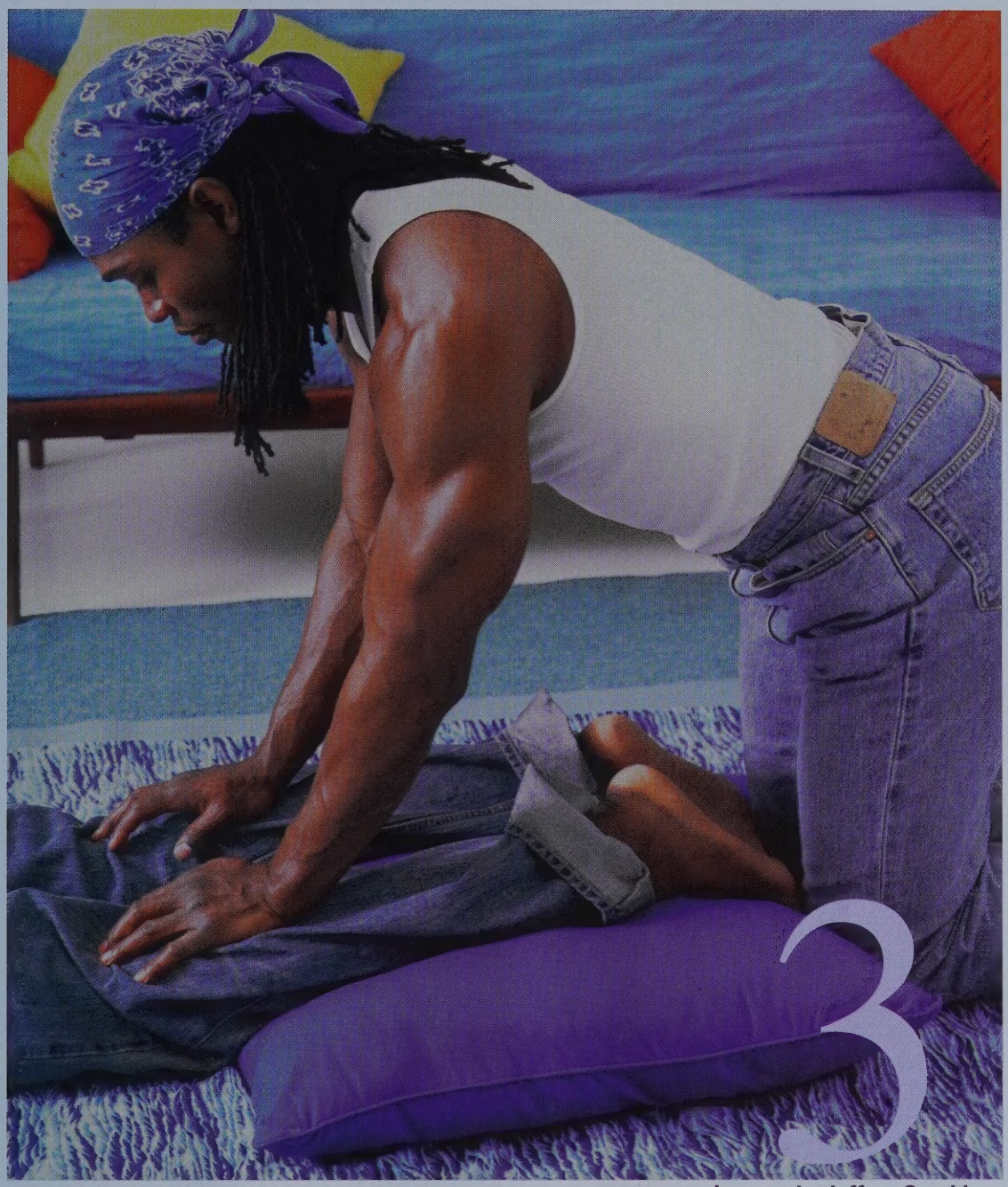


Be especially mindful of hand and wrist position. Avoid straining your wrists by keeping them in careful alignment with the forearms at all times. Never bend your wrist up or down or sideways while using pressure. Always keep your thumbs aligned with your wrists, and avoid over using them or applying too much pressure. Try using the heel of your hand, your fist, forearm or elbow to apply deep pressure. And remember that more pressure isn't always more effective.

Communicate with your partner. Listen and respond to his or her feedback regarding appropriateness of pressure, or any other issue of boundaries, safety, or comfort your partner might be experiencing. If your partner has an injury or illness, consult a professional massage therapist or physician before proceeding. Never massage over an open wound or bruise, and never massage near varicose veins.

2 Face, Temples, and Scalp

Have your partner lie down comfortably on his back with a pillow under his knees. Kneel above his head and sit back on your heels. Lift your partners' head onto your thighs (as shown). Place your hands under his head with your fingertips at the base of the head and lift the head slightly, allowing it to sink into your fingertips. Pull gently toward yourself. With your thumbs and fingertips massage his scalp, temples, and forehead in circular motions. Massage his entire face, feeling the contours of the bones. Apply circular strokes to the jaw muscles. Gently squeeze and pull on the ears. Finish by simply resting relaxed hands over your lover's ears and temples. Gazing into your lover's relaxed face, delight in his beauty.



images by Jeffrey Gamble

Back of the Legs and Feet–Shiatsu Style

Have your partner get comfortable on the floor, face down with a pillow under his chest and ankles for support. At your partners feet, on your hands and knees, use your body weight to lean your fists into the soles of your partners feet. Use a cat-like kneading rhythm. Make sure to keep your wrists stable, and check in with your partner regarding pressure. Grasp and gently pinch around ankles and Achilles tendons. Place open palms on the back of each calf, and continuing the rhythmic kneading motion. Effortlessly apply moderate compression simply by shifting your weight from one arm to the other while "walking" your hands up the leg. Do not apply pressure on or too close to the knee. On the thigh, continue with your palms or try using your fists for deeper pressure. When you reach the buttocks, begin "walking" your hands back down the leg until you reach the ankles. To finish, massage the feet again briefly.

4

The Back

Kneel on one knee near your partner's shoulder, the forward foot near his waist. With warm lotion or oil in your hands, apply lubricant to his entire back, around his hips and up the sides to his shoulders. Apply pressure by shifting your weight forward from back knee to front foot. This technique will protect your own back and make it easy for you to use deep pressure. Using your thumbs or soft fists on each side of the spine, stroke from the base of the neck to the bottom of the spine, around the sides of the hips, shifting your weight to a back knee. Pull open hands up the sides to his shoulders. Repeat several times, experimenting with depth of pressure and adding oil or lotion as needed. To focus on the lower back, shift your weight forward, push into sacrum with soft fists or palms. Then massage low back in circular motions with fingertips. Finish by stroking the entire back.

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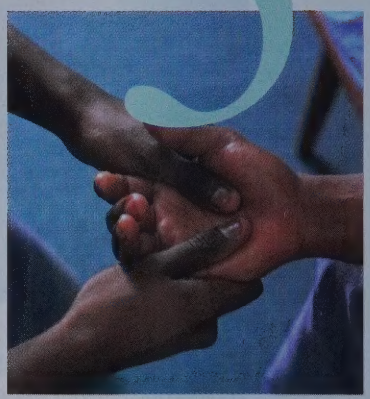

A Delightful Finish

A delightful way to end a massage session is for the receiving partner to massge the hands of the giving partner. Use a little lotion or oil and stroke the inside wrist and palm with your thumbs. Turn his hand over and stroke the back of the hand from the knuckles to the wrist. Squeeze and gently pull on each finger. Massage the other hand. Enjoy feeling the strength and love in your partner's hands.

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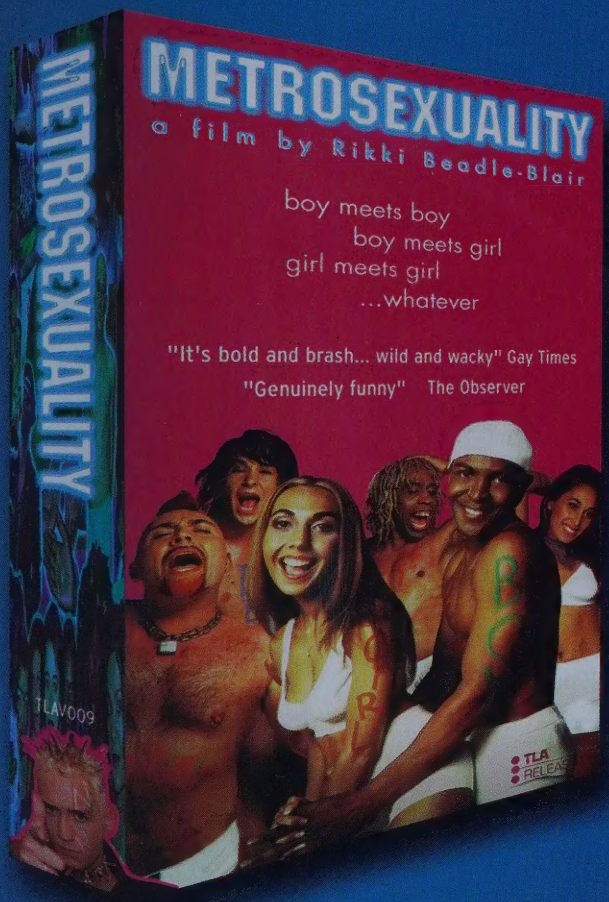

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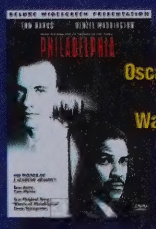

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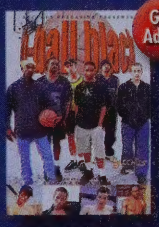

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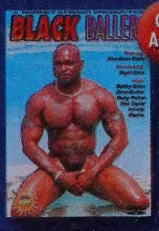

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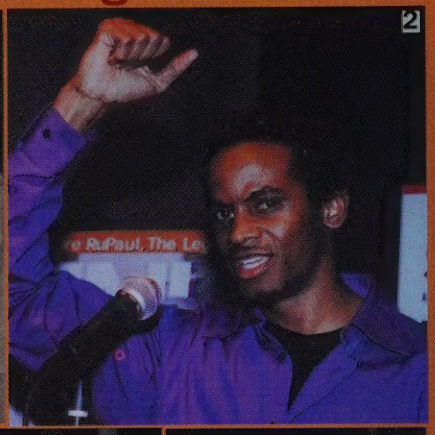
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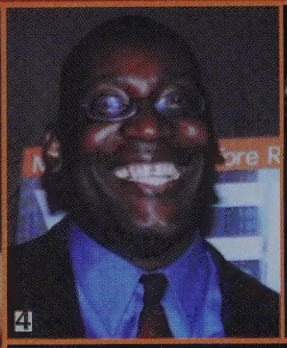
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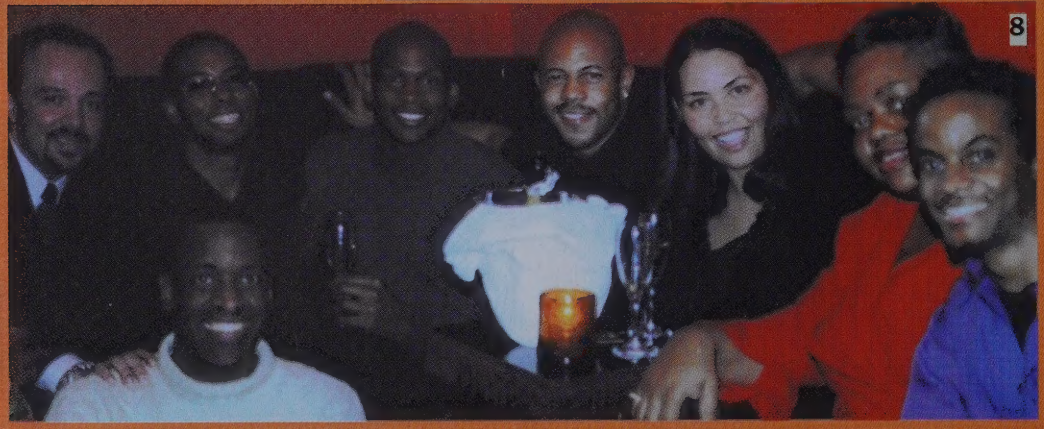
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Staff, freelancers, advertisers and friends turned out for Venus' recent cover party at the Soul Cafe' in Manhattan. Yes, thats our cover man, Rockmond Dunbar, in the middle of it all!

1. Freelance writers Michael K. Watts, Walter Greene, Venus publisher-Charlene Cothran and Dr. Alaric Blair . 2. Poet, Gordon James, Master of Ceremony, performs a segment of his one man show 'OUTbursts.' 3. Charlene Cothran presents Rockmond Dunbar with the Venus Landin Memorial Award of Courage for his outstanding support of People of African Descent In The Life. 4. Fashion stylist-Jerry Jordon Brown was on hand to greet guests including designers Franklin Rowe and Anton, as well as poet Pamela Sneed. 5. Editor-Malcom Venable takes a bow. 6. Jazz vocalist/pianist Miche Braden sang a tribute to the victims of 911, 'New York State of Mind.' 7. R&B group, Fine Art wooed the crowd with perfect harmony. 8. Relaxing after the show [l-r], Christopher Roberson; HBO executives Quincy Ballon and [Donia's husband] Dennis Williams; Rockmond Dunbar; freelancer writer, Donia Allen; Charlene Cothran, Gordon James. and actor, Charles Reese [l, lower]

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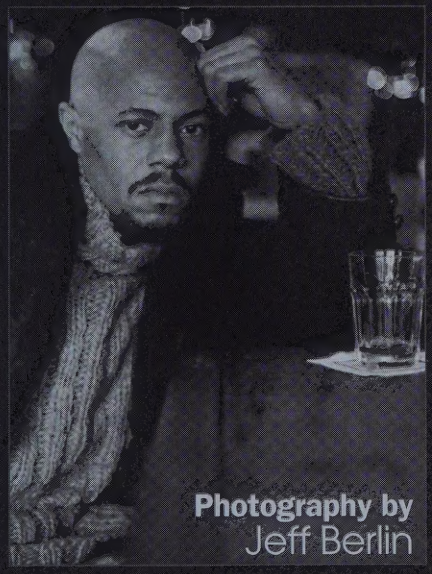

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Jeff Berlin

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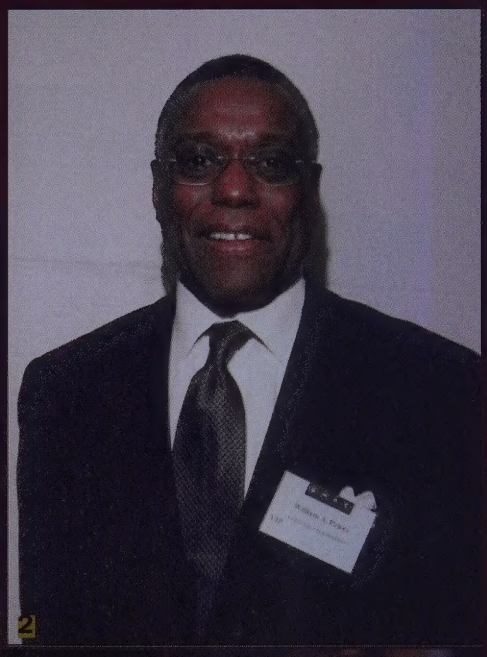
Angel Awards

Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD) honors journalists and activists at Riverside Church ceremony.



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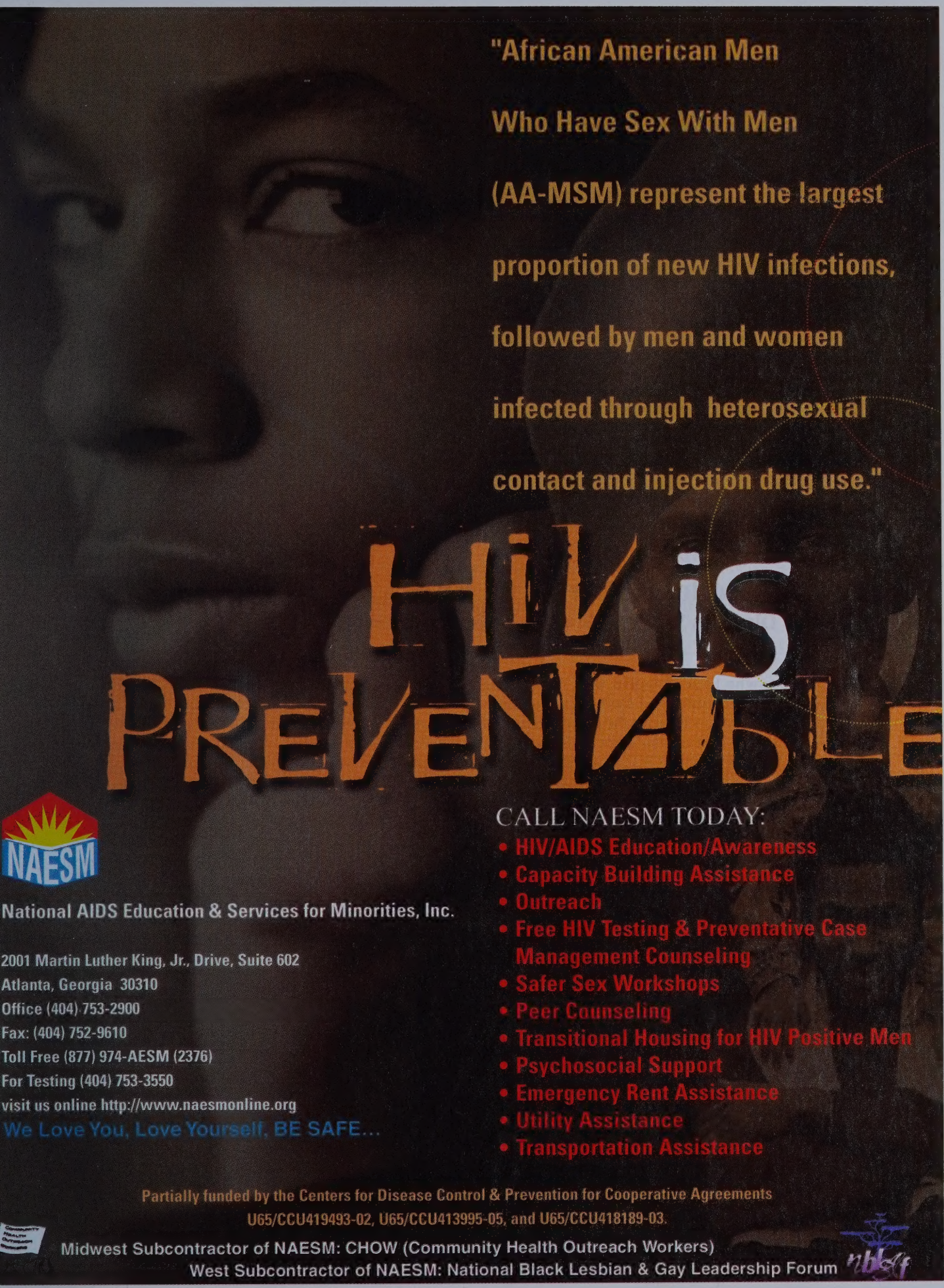
Photography by Charlie T

During the 15th Anniversary celebration of Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD) held at the Riverside Church, the Charles Angels Awards were given to outstanding members of New York's GLBT community. 1. Mayor Michael Bloomberg presented the Public Service Award to Jonathan Capehart. 2. Executive Director Bill Peters was on hand to greet guests. 3.The Crusaders for Change Award is presented by Sundiata Alaye' to Adodi/New York accepted by 4. Rev. Dana Rose. 5. Walter Naegle accepts the Advocacy Award on behalf of his life partner, the late Bayard Rustin. 6. Author, Linda Villarosa accepts the Health and Human Services Award. 7. Historian, Michael Henry Adams 8. GMAD Board members Marvin Peguese, Esquire & Dr. Marjorie Hill.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Phil Wilson, E.D. African American AIDS Policy and Training Institute (AAAPTI), Claire Griffin E. D. The Network Center of Newark NJ, Mary Hess of Orasure, Inc. and DR. Benny Primm.

African Americans Confer on AIDS

Gay Men Discuss What It Means To Be Masculine

words by Luciana Lopez

Those who have grappled with reconciling their masculinity and their sexual orientation know how difficult the process can be. If this issue is problematic for us individually, just imagine how stymieing it was to the panel at the 2002 National Conference on African Americans and AIDS. Coming up with a consensus among the panelists, convened to answer the question 'What does black masculinity mean to you?,' proved stickier than eating an ice cream cone in August.

Responses started out family-oriented. James L. King, author of the forthcoming book *Secrets, Life on the Down Low*, suggested that black masculinity means "being a good role model for your sons and educating your family." Traditional ideas of gender roles, with talk of the interplay in heterosexual relationships, soon followed.

However, such traditional masculine roles are only open to heterosexual men. "As a gay man, my masculinity cannot be defined by my relationships with women or anyone else," pointed out moderator Phil Wilson, executive director of the African-American AIDS Policy and Training Institute in Los Angeles. "It is a pushing away of responsibility if our definitions continue to be connected to someone else," he added.

Panelists agreed. "Masculinity shouldn't be defined by who you sleep with," said Leo Rennie, associate director of prevention programs at the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors. Masculinity is "about leadership, something about your character. It needs to be a much broader concept," he said. However, such definitions risk becoming arguments that are too broad, since definitions of black masculinity that are about character and following one's path in life "apply to women, too," pointed out Ron Simmons, executive director of Us Helping Us, People Into Living, of Washington, D.C.

But are such definitions even relevant? The inherent restriction in the terms masculine and feminine might be more limiting than helpful. What's needed, said Simmons, is the answer to a different question: "What is it going to mean to be an adult human being?"

Even audience members found themselves unable to propose concrete terms. Such definitions are a "lifelong process," said one 57-year-old grandmother. "Because we are constantly becoming, we never can really get to that firm definition. Somehow we have to balance the feminine and the masculine principles in ourselves."

The bottom line was that there was no bottom line. "This is the sixth time we've done this forum," said Wilson. "It is impossible to get the panel to define masculinity internally based on who we are." What does this mean for you? Perhaps it simply means that the definition of your masculinity is your own "because no one else can find the words for it."

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Los Angeles County's Department of Health Services has launched a new advertising campaign that challenges individuals as well as families, community and even government to do their part to stop the spread of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. This campaign speaks directly to families and communities in asking them to be a part of the solution to control the local epidemic.

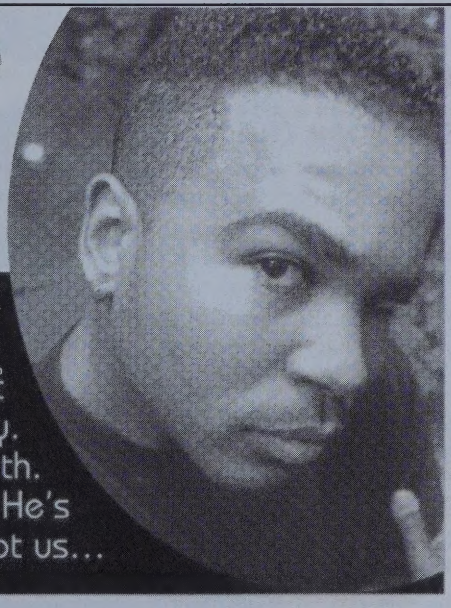
Alex Garcia, a 21 year-old gay man often calls his mother for home remedies on health problems. Although Alex is comfortable speaking to his mother on general health issues, the topic of sex and AIDS is non-existent in the Garcia family. "I don't feel comfortable talking to my family about the things I have to deal with," says Garcia. "I don't think I would talk to my mom about it even if I did get infected, even though I would depend on her to help me and take care of me."

"Families protect their kids," said Charles. L. Henry, Director of the Office of Aids Programs and Policy in the department's Public Health division. "We have to help families protect their kids from HIV. AIDS has already killed over 27,000 people in Los Angeles County alone."

Crisis Conversation

People of Color in Crisis, POCC, brought together former Executive Director of Gay Men of African Decent, Kevin McGruder, (l) and author Keith Boykin, (r) with Gary English,(c) Executive Director of POCC. McGruder and Boykin along with members of New York's black gay community and their allies discussed ways to investigate the deleterious effects of external and internal homophobia. This groundbreaking conversation is ongoing. Of particular interest will be the voices and experiences of those present, and how homophobia influences one's ability to be self determined; to live their lives as a whole and healthy being; and to create communities. Call for info, 718/230-0770.

People Into Living:



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(l to r) A.A.L.U. Keynote speaker, Talethea Best, president and founder of Best Consulting Group, Tiye Lasley, co-founder/executive director of A.A.L.U., and keynote speaker Carmen Pichardo, president of Gay and Lesbian Allies (G.A.L.A.).

African-American Lesbians United, AALU, celebrates 5th Anniversary at Rutgers University Conference

Nearly 75 women from the tri-state area participated in the AALU's 5th Anniversary Conference held at Rutgers University last winter. The one-day event included workshops, a luncheon, live entertainment, and of course, an after party. Enthusiastic discussion was spawned by workshop topics, which ran the gamet from "Finding Your Passion" facilitated by Valerie A. Winborne; "Freedom To Marry -Moving Toward Equality" by Bob Pileggi, Outreach Assoc. for Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund., Inc.; Faith Saunders' on "Being A Lesbian of Color Parent; A Unique & Special Group;" Talethea Best's "That's Drama-Moving Through Conflict;" Virginia Downey's "Homeopathy Healthcare: Is It Right For You?;" Galia Gichon on "Personal Finance Tips For Women;" "Bridging The Gap: From Coming Out To Being Out," facilitated by Tiye Lasley; and Niah Burke's "So You Want to Get Published?"

Circle of Friends
Vendors Show Their Wares at Home
by Denise Coles

Wouldn't it be nice to have all of those wonderful, creative, and diverse vendors you see at big shopping malls, street fairs, and marketing centers right at your fingertips? Well, "Circle of Friends Vendors Showcase" founders Darlene Green and Jackie Bolling are on a mission to bring vendors to a living room near you.

Circle of Friends Vendors Showcase features a revolving group of mostly black and mostly lesbian entrepreneurs who bring their products right into your home. This innovative concept, which had been a dream of Green's for several years, finally took shape when she teamed up with Bolling, who graciously shared some selling space with her at a Kwanzaa Fest last year. They put their heads together and came up with a sort of Tupperware-like idea to bring hand-made crafts and wearable art into the home of a willing host. The gracious host invites her "circle of friends" to come shop and party. Food, music, and community-based businesses among friends all intermingle in an intimate and familiar setting.

The first Circle of Friends Vendors Showcase premiered last February at the lovely and spacious home of Annette Fearon. Delicious Caribbean delectables were served and customers were in abundance. All those in attendance, from the vendors to the patrons, truly enjoyed the idea of having a showcase in a home setting. As one customer put it, "This is so much more relaxed and personal." People chatted with one another, networked, met knew friends, and most importantly, came away with some amazing merchandise.

From picturesque light switches, aromatic salts, one-of-a-kind designer headbands, and personally designed beautiful hats, to intimate loungewear and exquisitely crafted bags, there was something for everyone. Prices ranged from as little as $3 up to $300, and most of the vendors accepted checks and credit cards. Best of all, unlike at Tupperware parties, you could leave with your merchandise or make an appointment for a personal visit.

For more information on how to set up a vendor showcase in your home, please contact Darlene Green or Jackie Bolling, pictured top right.

Vendors- **Jackie's Vendor Enterprises** 718/778.8145; Darlene Green 718/372-4166; **CoCo Satin & Lace**, cocosl@bigplanet.com or 212/252-4489; **E.G. Headbands**, kumo@hotmail.com or 917/353-0138; **Exotic Fine Accessories**, 718/596-4536; **Matthews Hats**, www.sowear.com or 718/859-4683; Niambi's Collectibles, 718/243-0875 **Simply Marvelous Creations and Other Fabulous Things**, wholesale/retail, 212/726-1100 **Tahitian Noni Juice**, www.tahitiannoni.com, Rev. M. Kennedy ID# 1047615

woman 2 woman
spirit health study

The Mautner Project for lesbians with cancer, hopes to examine issues of health care among black lesbians.

Whether you are lesbian, bisexual, a woman who partners with women, a same-gender loving woman, queer, in the life, or a dyke you are at risk for breast and other gynecologic cancers. You have probably also experienced barriers to getting health care, either from a heterosexist healthcare-system, lack of health-care insurance, or misinformation about lesbian health needs. As the recent Institute of Medicine report on racial and ethnic health disparities noted, just being Black can be a barrier to getting quality health care. Black lesbians stand at the intersection of these two worlds subject to both heterosexism and racism. A study by the Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer, hopes to examine these and other issues.

The *Women 2 Women Spirit Health Study* is a confidential, national health study of black women who partner with women. The survey will examine our health-screening practices for breast, cervical, and other cancers; cancer risk factors such as smoking; body mass index; social support; family and personal medical history; exercise and nutrition; barriers to health care; and butch/femme gender identity. The study is being conducted in partnership with several black lesbian organizations and community leaders and activists across the country including Zuna Institute, United Lesbians of African Heritage (ULOAH), the National Black Lesbian and Gay Lesbian Leadership Forum, and *Venus* magazine, among others.

The lead investigator for the study is Cheryl B. Fields, MPH, pictured above, Health Education and Research Director for the Mautner Project. The study is being guided by a Scientific Advisory Committee made up of noted African-American lesbian and allied health researchers, clinicians, and health educators including: Lucille Adams-Campbell, Ph.D; Lisa Bowleg, Ph.D; Nicole Cozier-Boyd, MBA/MS; Marilyn Gaston, M.D.; Joyce Hunter, DSW; Alicia Matthews, Ph.D; and Vallerie Wagner.

Black women age 18 and over who identify as lesbian or bisexual are eligible to participate in this study. Questionnaires will be mailed to women subscribing to *Venus* magazine and to women requesting a copy through the project's toll free number 866/W2W-SPIRIT or 866/929-7747. Questionnaires will be available this summer at www.mautnerproject.org, at various Black Prides, and through select community-based organizations.

say it loud!
black pride survey report compete

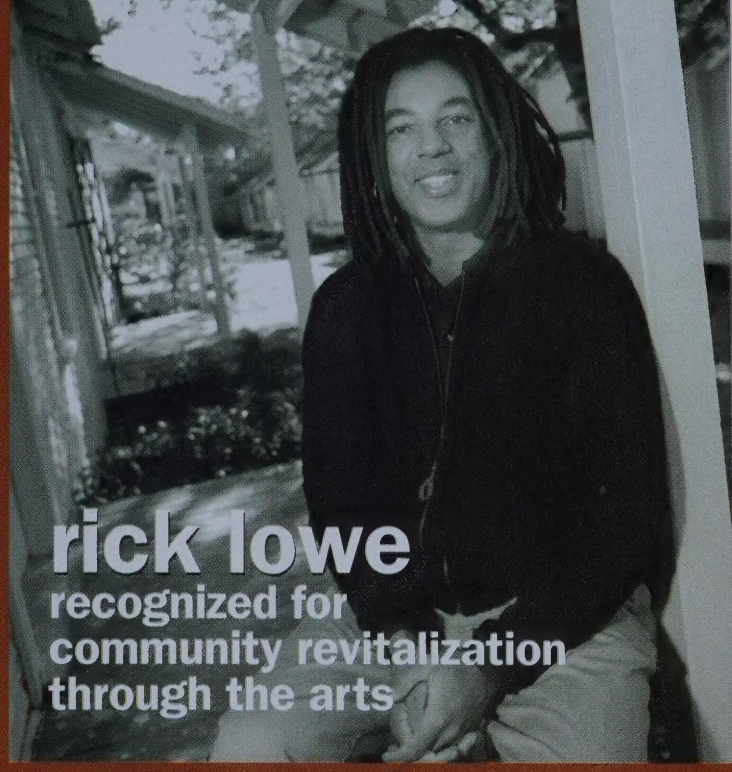
Largest-Ever Study Examines Priorities and Demographics of Black Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People

Say It Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud is a collaboration among nine Black GLBT Pride organizations, a team of Black researchers, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Representing the largest national, multi-city sample of Black GLBT people ever surveyed on such a wide array of topics, the study also found HIV/AIDS, hate violence, and recognition of same-sex relationships to be the top policy priorities of Black GLBT people.

"This report provides a first-time comprehensive look at the demographics, experiences, and priorities of Black gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people," said Juan Battle, Ph.D, and Cathy J. Cohen,Ph.D, the study's lead researchers and primary authors. "It contains significant policy implications for the predominantly white GLBT community, and for the predominantly straight African-American community.

Among the key findings of the report, respondents identify the most important issues facing Black GLBT people as: HIV/AIDS, hate violence, and marriage/domestic partnership. A high prevalence of parenting is also revealed: 40 percent of women, 18 percent of men, and 15 percent of transgender people reported having at least one child. Half of the respondents say racism is a problem in the white GLBT community; two-thirds report that homophobia is a problem within the Black community.

Say It Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud is the third report released by NGLTF's Policy Institute in the last year that examines issues of concern to GLBT people of color and low-income people of all backgrounds. The previous two studies examined the effects of welfare reform on GLBT families and the impact of social discrimination on HIV risk among Latino gay men. All three reports are available at www.ngltf.org/library. For more information about the Racial and Economic Justice Initiative or the Black Pride Survey Project, please visit www.ngltf.org/pi/blackpride.htm.

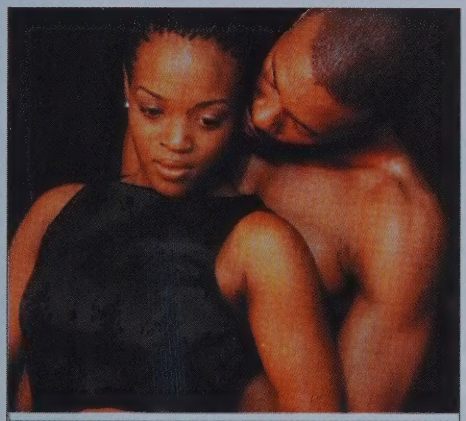


rick lowe

recognized for community revitalization through the arts

For his outstanding efforts to educate and enlighten through art, Rick Lowe has been jointly awarded the eighth annual Heinz Award for Arts and Humanities. Artist and activist Rick Lowe is the founder of Project Row Houses, a neighborhood-based public art program that renovated 22 "shotgun" houses in the middle of one of Houston's poorest neighborhoods. He saw in these houses (which are inused with African architecture passed along through the slave trade) an opportunity to create a world-class art project in a low-income neighborhood where such art is rarely seen and experienced. The once-dilapidated buildings are now functioning as art galleries, workshop spaces, offices, and housing for young single mothers where they can learn life skills in child care, money management, and home care. The NEA has since come to consider Project Row Houses a model for similar projects it has funded in other cities.

"Project Row Houses has afforded me the privilege and honor of working with a richly broad and diverse group of extraordinary people," Lowe said. "Our success has truly been based on their inspiration and dedication. It is because of them that I am able to receive this wonderful Award."



"Sexual Secrets:

Us Helping Us and The Women's Collective Sponsor Community Forum on "Sexual Secrets: Black men on the 'down low' and the women in their lives."

In Washington D.C. last March, Us Helping Us, Inc. and The Women's Collective sponsored a standing room only forum and panel discussion on the bisexuality of black men and its affect on the raising HIV infection rate among black women.

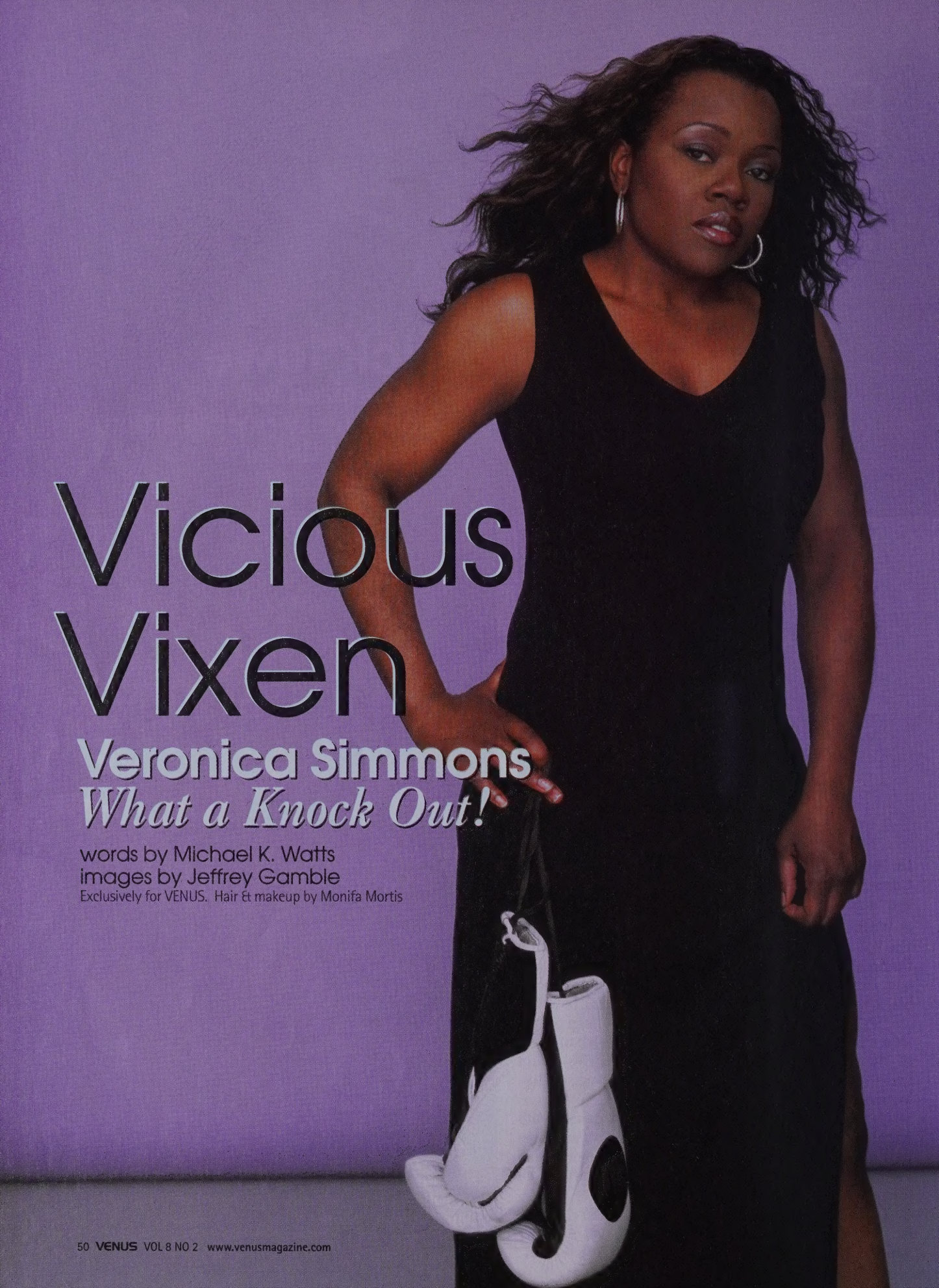
"So many women have no knowledge of men on the 'down low,' " says Patricia Nalls, the executive director of The Women's Collective, "The purpose of this forum was to educate women and to start a constructive dialogue with men."

Us Helping Us is a nonprofit community-based AIDS organization that specializes in HIV prevention and support services for black gay and bisexual men. The Women's Collective provides support services for HIV-infected women and their families.

The community forum was free and open to the public. For more information, contact: Us Helping Us at 202/546-8200 or The Women's Collective at 202/483-7003.

Skinnin' and Grinnin'

Leatherman Tom Dickerson was all smile after edging out seven contestants as Mr. San Diego Leather 2002. Dickerson will serve as both a leader and a representative for San Diego at local and out-of-town leather events. He will also represent the San Diego Leather Community at the International Mr. Leather contest held in Chicago. Nicole Murray Ramirez, International President of the International Imperial Court, was on hand to congratulate him.



Vicious Vixen

Veronica Simmons
What a Knock Out!

words by Michael K. Watts
images by Jeffrey Gamble
Exclusively for VENUS. Hair & makeup by Monifa Mortis

"Veronica Simmons is the most decorated amateur female boxer in the ring. So why can't she get more fights?"

The bell rings. It's the first round and boxer "Vicious" Veronica Simmons moves right in on her opponent, delivering a power-punching left jab. Then a straight right and a sharp left hook. A couple of 1-2 punches and a few merciless uppercuts. Sensing her opponent is weakening, Simmons uses her brutal combination punches, one after another after another. Then, Simmons relentlessly throws another straight right and left hook right upside her opponent's head, knocking her out cold. The fight is already over, and it only lasted 48 seconds. The referee calls in the ring doctor and flings Simmons' boxing gloves in the air, declaring her the undisputed winner.

That's pretty much what happened on May 19, 2000, when "Vicious" Veronica Simmons defeated Evelyn Holly with a first-round knockout in her professional debut fight in Philadelphia. Simmons' trainer, Alexander Newbold, called the KO 'vicious,' and the name has stuck ever since. A year later in Detroit, Simmons, 33, crushed Kathleen Brauer, again in the first round, bringing her boxing record to 2-0 with two KOs.

Standing 5'9" and weighing in at 168 pounds, the super middleweight boxer rightfully earned the moniker 'vicious' for her no-holds-barred boxing style. Relentless with all of her opponents, Simmons doesn't believe in wasting time in the ring. "I look for the big punch. If I can hurt you, I'm gonna hurt you. I'm gonna take you out. I'm not gonna play with you for three or four rounds when I don't have to," said Simmons, who is ranked No. 2 in her weight class by the International Female Boxers Association (IFBA).

By day, the soft-spoken Simmons is a federal correction officer for the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City. And when she's preparing for a fight, the Brooklyn native spends her time at Kingsway Gym in Manhattan, training with former champion boxer Alexander Newbold, better known as "Elliot Ness." Her rigorous weekly training regimen includes six days of sparring, hitting the heavy bag and the speed bag, and running 3.5 miles every other day. And that's not counting the weight lifting, the dips, the push-ups, the pull-ups, and the intense abdominal exercises. Ness works Simmons just like he would a male boxer, but he refuses to spar with her in training because her high-power punches are no joke. "If she hit me, I might forget she's a woman. I'm libel to get hurt. I might get knocked out. It'd be very embarrassing," Ness confessed. "She's the Roy Jones Jr. of female boxing."

Unstoppable

Simmons began boxing in 1995 and went pro in 1999, leaving behind an amazing amateur boxing career and a 15-0 record, with 11 KOs in the first round. As if that wasn't enough, Simmons made boxing history as the first woman to win four consecutive New York City Golden Gloves titles (1996-1999) and the first woman to win those titles in three different weight classes. Simmons went on to become the first to win titles (1997-1999). After the 1999 championships, Simmons joined an eight-woman U.S. team to compete in the Feenix Box Cup in Turku, Finland , where she won a gold medal.

Simmons goes on to explain further by stating:

"The matchmaker actually gets a chance to scout who you're going to fight. He gets a chance to get tape, go out to the gym, see this girl training, get some information from her. If they see that she can beat their fighter, she's not gonna get that fight," Simmons explained.

"The matchmaker actually gets a chance to scout who you're going to fight. He gets a chance to get tape, go out to the gym, see this girl training, get some information from her. If they see that she can beat their fighter, she's not gonna get that fight."

She's probably the most decorated boxer in U.S. amateur women's boxing history, and she's never lost a fight. Simmons justifies her phenomenal track record: "I know how to adjust myself in the ring when I'm fighting anybody. If I'm fighting somebody tall, I got ammunition for her. If I'm fighting somebody short, I got something for her. And I'm extremely stronger than most of the women fighters."

Future in Promoters' Hands

With such dazzling amateur and professional records, Simmons is poised to become a world champion. There's just one little problem—she's can't get any fights. Why has a boxer with her 'vicious' reputation only fought twice since she went pro? The explanation is simple: women's boxing in the U.S. is officially only about a decade old. And on the professional level, there is no organized structure in place to mandate fights between boxers ranked in a certain weight class. So, Simmons' career is in the hands of promoters and their matchmakers who decide which boxers get fights, usually based on popular appeal and potential box office draw, and not skill or fight record.

The next problem is that the promoters who would book Simmons for a fight can't find a boxer in her weight class who's willing to step in the ring with her and essentially lose. And in a profession where winning—not money—ultimately determines your livelihood, no one's willing to take that chance, even for higher pay. Even the IFBA's No. 3-ranked Laila Ali, a super middleweight boxer who is also the daughter of boxing legend Muhammad Ali, refuses to fight Simmons. Despite Ali's 10-0, 8 KO pro record, she's no match for a powerhouse like Simmons. Ali has no amateur boxing experience, and she's only been boxing professionally for 2 and a half years. Johnny "Yahya" McClain, Ali's promoter and husband, says that she won't be fighting Simmons any time soon because he wants Ali "to get more comfortable in the ring." McClain also added that Simmons has "no marketing value" and "no one knows her."

Hope for Quality Fights

One courageous woman hopes to change things for women boxers like Simmons. Tiffany "Honey B" Church, CEO and president of Honey B Boxing & Entertainment, plans to produce a series of boxing events this year at the famous Apollo Theatre in Harlem. Church and business partner, Robert Miles, of Phoenix Sports Management, are organizing these prizefights to feature top women's boxers, including

Simmons, in multiple weight classes. With the help of potential event sponsors, Church is on a crusade to produce high-quality boxing events and give skilled women boxers the exposure and the pay that they deserve.

"If you fight on a Honey B Boxing & Entertainment card, you gotta be the best," Honey B asserted. "I'm trying to get a handful of the best girls and put on the best fights. I'm not talking about cat fights—I'm talking about fights with girls that can box, girls that have skills. And I'm gonna pay these girls what they're worth."

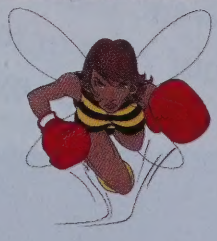
Salaries of women boxers today could definitely use a boost. According to the IFBA, women boxers take home as little as $800 per match, and most don't get more than $10,000 for a championship title bout. Men boxers make about $500 per match on the low end. But, an average men's match could pay $30,000 or even multi-million dollar salaries for televised matches, which are almost a rarity in women's boxing. Still, Simmons is so eager to fight. She'd box almost for free if it meant getting television exposure.

Beyond Boxing

Simmons constantly finds herself toe-to-toe with the challenges of boxing, yet she refuses to give up. Meanwhile, she has a lot on her plate keeping her busy. Simmons plays defensive end for the New York Sharks, a women's professional football team. A prized basketball player in high school and college, she's also considering trying out for the WNBA in 2003. And in June of that year, she's getting married to her fiancé of six months, Rasheen Northington. And that's not all! With a recent boxing role on NBC's *Third Watch* under her belt, Simmons is still pursuing acting. In the next few years, she plans to own her own business and start a family.

But for now, Simmons is focused on boxing and finding promoters who can take her to the next level. And though she'll fight anyone, Ali is the one she has her eyes on. Simmons says fighting Ali is essentially about getting the exposure she deserves; destroying Ali in the ring would be a breeze.

Simmons' challenge to Ali: "Forget about fighting those tomato cans, those bums, those school teachers, people with no experience, and stop padding your record," Simmons said. "If you want to really establish yourself as a real boxer, you need to fight the best. And I consider myself the best super middleweight in the world." No doubt, Simmons is ready to rumble!



Age: 34
Status: Single [sorry girls, she's straight!]
Record: 7 wins 3 losses 1 draw 0 KOs

ALICIA "SLICK" ASHLEY

Featherweight Champion, International Women's Boxing Federation (IWBF)

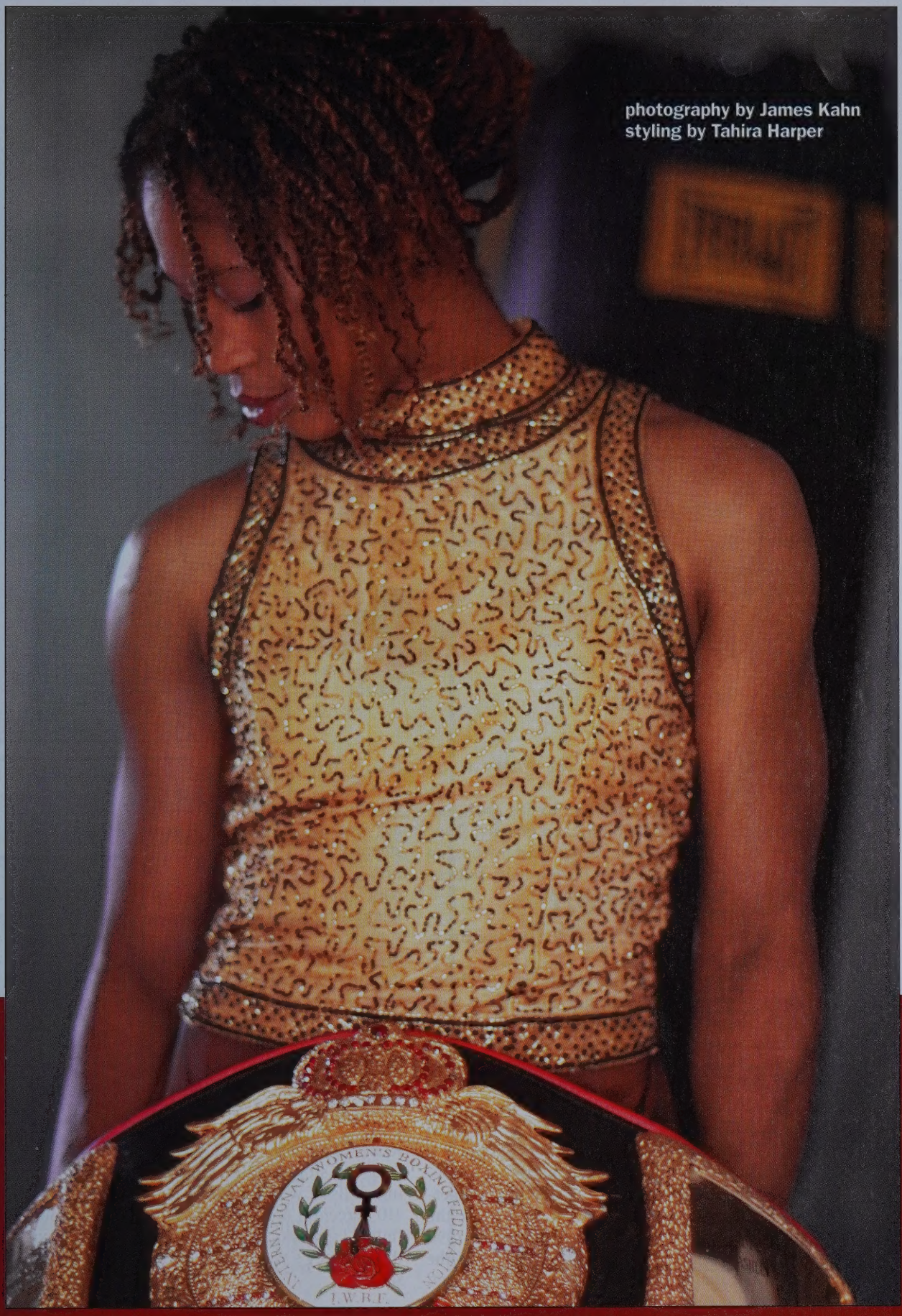
"There is no way that you can sleepwalk through this sport. The second you believe you are too good, someone will be there to put you on the mat. Unlike team sports, your wins or losses are your own."

VENUS: What do you think is the greatest deterrent to the general public's acceptance of professional female boxing?
ALICIA: Treating the sport as a joke and a sideshow. For a little while with the entrance of Laila Ali into the sport, more respect and attention was given to women boxers. Then Fox decided to air *Celebrity Boxing*. That one show has knocked female boxing back 10 years to bikini mud-wrestling status.

VENUS: The general public's perception about women in professional sports, like basketball, is that most of the women are gay. Is this perception prevalent in women's boxing as well?
ALICIA: I don't think so. I am heterosexual and an athlete's sexual preference isn't something I think about when I compete or watch a sporting event. Sports should only generate respect and awe of an individual's physical or mental prowess.

VENUS: How do men and women react toward you when they find out that you are a professional boxer?
ALICIA: Women generally are fascinated and have a 'You go, girl' attitude toward it, even if they can't see themselves doing it. But it also inspires some women because I'm naturally shy and very feminine. You wouldn't guess by looking at me which sport I compete in.

continued on page 87

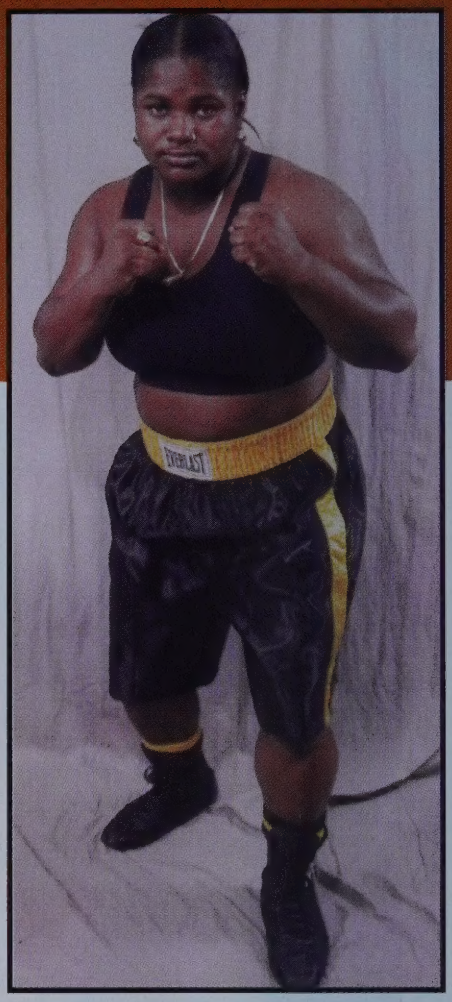


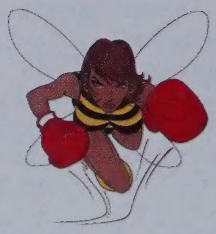
photography by James Kahn
styling by Tahira Harper

KISHA "AWESOME" SNOW

Ranked the Number 1 Heavyweight Female Contender in the World

"When I step into the ring I give 110%. I don't run around the ring or put on "cat fights." I get into the ring and "box." I give boxing fans their money's worth and everybody leaves the arena satisfied."





Age: 33
Status: Engaged [to a guy!]
Record: 6 wins 1 loss 3 KOs

VENUS: WHAT IS THE REACTION ON THE STREET TO YOU AS A PROFESSIONAL BOXER?

KISHA : For the most part, people think it's great, but some people still see female boxing as a novelty. They believe that I will never get the recognition my boxing skills deserve because I was not born a man, but everyone has a right to their own opinion.

VENUS: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL BOXER?

KISHA : Boxing became my salvation from the drugging, drinking, smoking, and the late-night fights with my ex-wife, Bonnie. We lived together for eight years with her two children in a house in Jamestown, N.Y. In 1996, Jamestown had its first 'Tough-Woman Competition' and the prize was $500. In a Tough-Woman Competition, there are no different weight classifications. An opponent fights her way to the final competition where a lightweight opponent could be in the final championship bout duking it out with a heavyweight opponent. My friends talked me into competing. I won the Jamestown competition, took home the prize, and was then eligible to compete in the first 1996 Tough-Woman World Competition title. I made it to the semifinal of the Tough-Woman World Competition and lost, but Ienjoyed the high I got when I stepped into the ring and the opportunity to better my life. My relationship with Bonnie was in trouble and our constant arguing was pushing us further and further apart. My father talked me into coming back to Brooklyn and getting into the gym. I focused on my boxing skills full time, then started competing in amateur tournaments.

VENUS: MANY WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS REFUSED TO TALK TO US BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT PEOPLE WOULD PERCEIVE THEM AS GAY. WHAT IS YOU COMFORT LEVEL WITH REGARD TO EVEN DOING THIS INTERVIEW?

KISHA : I am bisexual so it was never an issue. I wanted to do the story because people do not respect the boxing skills of women. When I step into the ring, I give 110 percent. I don't run around the ring or put on 'cat fights.' I get into the ring and "box." I give boxing fans their money's worth, and everybody leaves the arena satisfied.

Kisha with ex-Manager Jimmy Opharrow

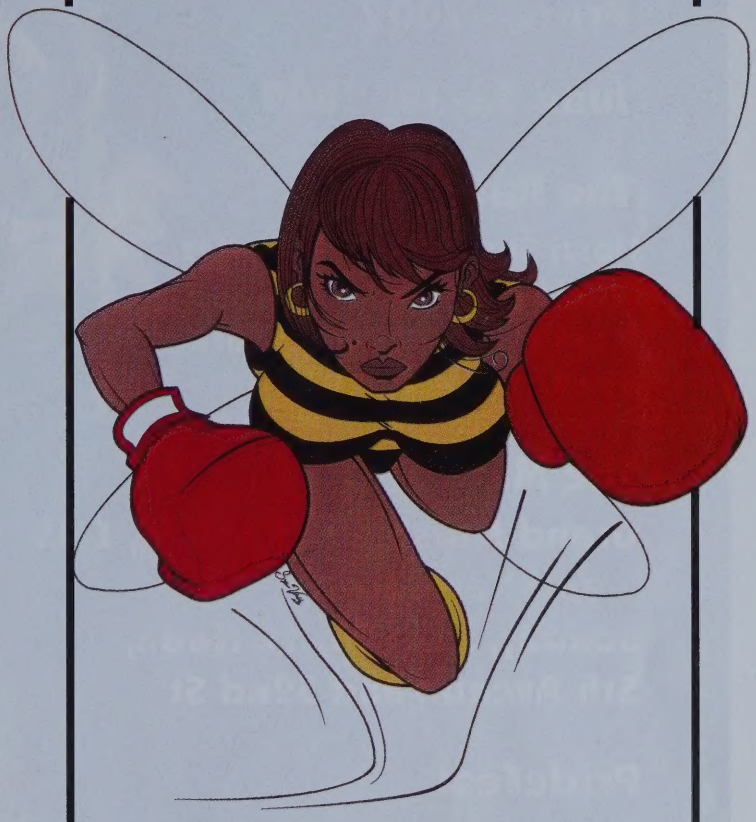
VENUS: WHAT FIGHT AND AGAINST WHO, WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR MOST MEMORABLE, GOOD OR BAD, AND WHY?

KISHA: My most memorable fight, and the one I would like to forget, was against Vonda Ward on February 2, 2001, and was televised on ESPN2. It was my first loss ever and my last professional fight. Truth be known, I underestimated my opponent. I stepped into the ring unprepared and not in shape. I lost a fight that should have been an easy win for me. A rematch was scheduled, but never took place. I am still waiting patiently to redeem myself. Ms. Ward was lucky the last time, but rest assured my boxing fans, if Ms. Ward would stop running and agree to a rematch, you will not be disappointed. Ms. Awesome, the Queen of the heavyweight division, will prevail.

VENUS: WHO ARE THE MOST TALKED ABOUT FEMALES IN PROFESSIONAL BOXING? DO THEIR SKILLS LIVE UP TO THE HYPE?

KISHA: The most talked about females in boxing are Christy Martin, Laila Ali, and Jacqui Frazier-Lyde. As far as their boxing skills living up to the hype, I don't think so. Christy "The Coal Miner's Daughter" Martin signed with Don King in 1993 and her record is 31 KOs. Why? Because of the inexperience and the lack of boxing skills of the other opponents that she is put in the ring with. Ms. Martin has been avoiding Lucia Rijker for five years. In 1998, a fight was scheduled between Ms. Martin and Ms. Rijker. It was going to be the biggest payday in female boxing history, $1.5 million, but Ms. Martin pulled out. Why? I say, fear of being exposed and not living-up to the hype of the fighters coming out of the "King Camp." Oh, and let's not forget the Christy Martin vs. Sumya Anani fight in Las Vegas on Dec. 18,1998. It was supposed to be an easy win for Ms. Martin, but it turned out to be her worst nightmare. [It was] Ms. Martin's first loss against a competitive fighter since starting her professional boxing career in 1989. To be considered the best in female boxing, you must first get in the ring and fight the best.

HONEY·B
BOXING & ENTERTAINMENT



Honey B Boxing
Harlem USA
P. O. Box 279
New York, NY 10027
Office/Fax
718.681.6545

Across a Dark Sky, the Rainbow Shines Brightly

New York City Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride - 2002

June 23-30, 2002

The Rally

Host: Susan Westenhoeffer
Sunday, June 23
2 pm to 6 pm, Bryant Park
42nd St and 6th Ave

The March

Grand Marshalls: FireFlag, EMS and Karla Jay
Sunday, June 30, 12 Noon,
5th Avenue and 52nd St

PrideFest

Sunday, June 30
11am-10:30pm
Greenwich Village

Dance 16: Dance on the Pier

DJ: Junior Vasquez
Sunday, June 30,
4:00pm – 10:30 pm,
Pier 54
in Hudson River Park

Heritage of Pride
154 Christopher St
– Suite 1D
New York, NY 10014
Phone 212 80-PRIDE
http://www.nycpride.org
Photocredit: Joseph Barna

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VENUS

MasterBeat
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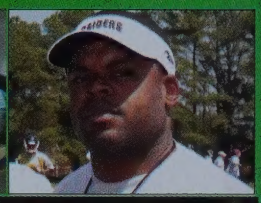
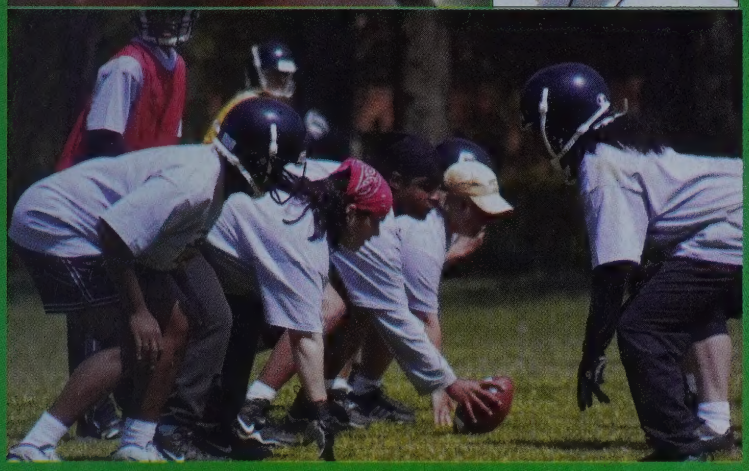
The Atlanta Leopards

Photography by Jena Jones





Coach D and The ladies of the Atlanta Leopards opened their season at the Lakewood Ampitheatre this Spring. Check their schedule at www.atlantaleopards.com

Get Your Butt in Gear!

Professional Women's Football

National Women's Football League (NWFL) www.nwfl-central.com Players are paid a percentage of what the league makes.2nd Season April to June. 20 Teams, divided into two divisions. The Philadelphia Liberty Belles are the 2001 NWFL Champs.

Women's American Football League (WAFL) www.thewafl.com, 2001 was Inaugural Season for this league. 17 teams, season November to January.

Women's Professional Football League (WPFL) www.womensprofootball.com 11 teams. 2nd season July to October. Houston Energy WPFL 2001 Champs.

Western States Football League (WSFL) www.wsflfootball.com 2001 was inaugural season, 8 teams.

Independent Football Leagues

Lady Tackle Football League (LTFL) www.eteamz.com/ltfl

Independent Women's Football League (IWFL) www.eteamz.com/iwfl

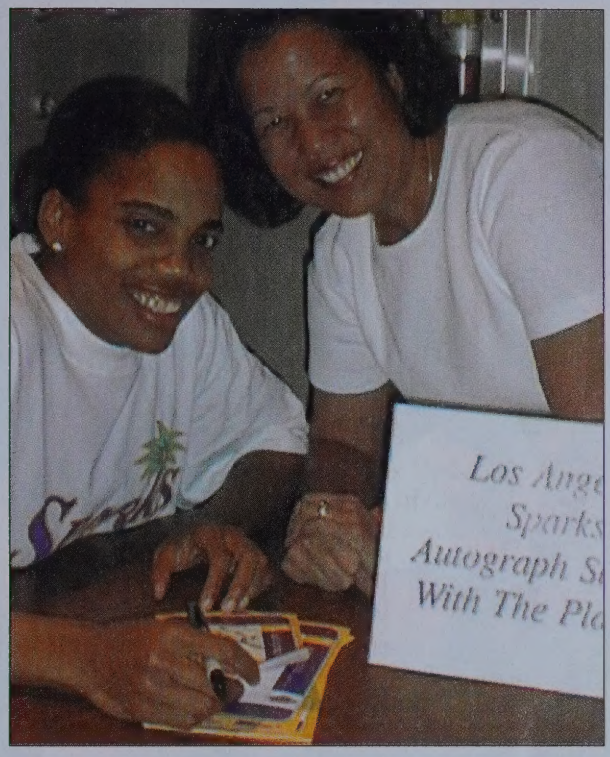
United Women's Football League (UWFL)

Women's Football League (WFL)

For more information on the independent leagues http://members.aol.com/booinla/other.htm

L.A. SPARKS OUTREACH TO LESBIAN COMMUNITY: A MARKETING FIRST!

Tameka Dixon, #21 for LA Sparks meets fans, signs autographs & gives away game tickets.

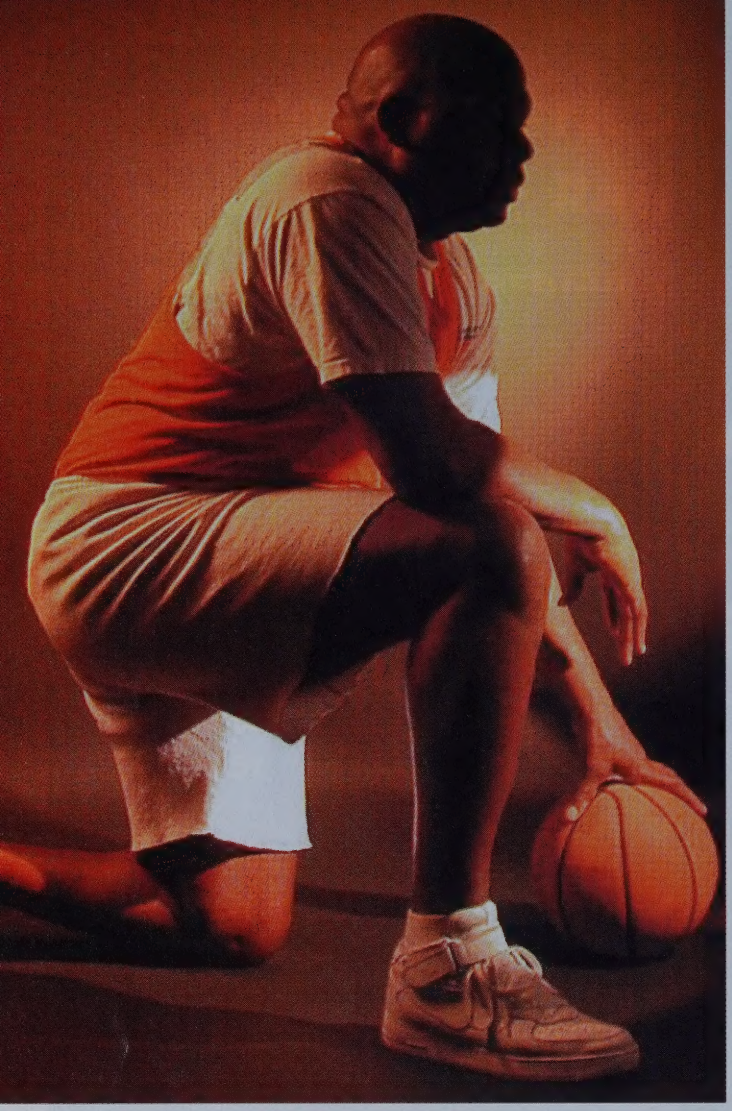


In a bold, but savvy marketing move, the LA SPARKS professional women's basketball team (and sister team to the LA Lakers) joined up with GIRL BAR®/LOS ANGELES, the country's largest lesbian nightclub, to actively promote the team to the nightclub's gay members. This marks the first time a professional sports team has openly acknowledged and actively and officially pursued fans within the gay community.

Last Spring the Girl Bar hosted an official LA SPARKS season kick-off and pep rally night with team members making a special appearance at the club to meet fans in person and sign autographs. The event also included licensed product, T-shirt and game ticket giveaways, which were provided by the Sparks.

Sparks General Manager Penny Toler approached Girl Bar founders Sandy Sachs and Dr. Robin Gans with the idea of proactively reaching out to lesbian fans as a way to increase game attendance, drive ticket sales and set a positive example. Together they came up with idea of holding the pep rally promotion, with the complete support of the Lakers organization and management, which owns the team.

"This is a smart move for the Sparks," said Girl Bar co-founder Sandy Sachs. "They recognize and are reaching out to the very core of their fan base and these fans could not be happier. It's was a fun night!"



Is There A New World Coming for Gay Athletes in Team Sports?

words by Phil Petrie

In the world of professional team sports—baseball, basketball, and football—gay and lesbian athletes (in basketball) are still closeted in the locker room. And coming "out" hitting, dribbling, or running on a much talked about "level playing field" is fanciful, perhaps even an imaginative dream.

Dave Kopay, a white running back who once played in the National Football League (NFL), once complained during an interview in 1975 that "the sports world is the last protector of the faith to be bigoted and discriminate." Kopay played for five teams between 1964 and 1972. He is one of only two players in NFL history to declare himself homosexual. The other player is Roy Simmons, also white, an offensive guard for the New York Giants and the Washington Redskins from 1979 to 1983. Simmons revealed he was gay during an appearance on *The Phil Donahue Show* in 1993.

It is interesting to note that both players declared themselves gay *after* they had ended their careers. Only in non-team sports have athletes come out as homosexual while still active in their sports. In tennis, superstar Martina Navratilova became the first openly gay athlete to declare herself while still playing. That was in 1981, the year fellow tennis player Billie Jean King was "outed" when named in what a salivating press called a "girlamony" lawsuit. A handful of swimming champions left the water long enough to declare their homosexuality, the most famous being Greg Louganis.

"It's so important for us to be visible and for everyone to know we're the same," Kopay told a packed house at a Harvard University seminar on athletes and homosexuality in February.

Is There Anybody 'Out' There?

In spite of Kopay's assertion, gay players in professional team sports remain invisible, silent. Could it be that there are no black gay or lesbian athletes in professional team sports?

"Not hardly," a New Yorker with a same-sex partner who knows the city's social scene, told *Venus* after a promise of anonymity. "There are homosexuals in every other profession: doctors, lawyers, politicians, coaches, trainers; you name it. Why do you think there wouldn't be football or basketball players 'in the family?' No one says anything because of the commercials and endorsements."

Is the real question then, whether potential corporate sponsors are ready to accept gay athletes and use them to endorse their products? Has the professional athlete's success locked him into silence?

It's easy for those not in the family, and frankly for those within it, to demand gay athletes to take a stance for themselves and/or gay rights and come out shooting.

Doing so, however, poses not only an ontological problem (being yourself), but a teleological one (at what cost) as well. America is still a nation where privilege is given to men, money, and white people. If professional black athletes came out, they would pay a terrible price. Such a move could end their careers and empty their deep pockets. Without a doubt, commercials, endorsements, and whatever other benefits corporate America may tender are out the window. The day gay athletes step out on diamonds, courts, and fields is the day the cheering stops.

Change On The Gay Horizon

However, there have been signs that change is coming. A marketing article in the July 1, 2001, *New York Times*, reported that "Two Major League Baseball teams, the Chicago Cubs and San Francisco Giants, are starting to aim ads and promotions at homosexual fans. At least six teams in the Women's National Basketball Association are taking similar steps to encourage lesbians to attend games and to thank those already buying tickets for doing so."

Judging from attendance at the New York Liberty games, the part of the program that encourages lesbians to attend games has succeeded. Madison Square Garden is more than crowded with ladies in the family.

Still, no professional athlete in a team sport, black or white, male or female, has declared him or herself gay or lesbian while still playing in that sport. One brother in baseball who didn't announce or deny his homosexuality while a player, fell victim to homophobia when it was suspected he was gay. Sixteen years after he left baseball, Glenn Burke was dead. Cynics claim Burke was driven to his death after being kicked out of baseball. That may be a bit of a stretch. Nonetheless, Burke's is a cautionary tale for black professional athletes in team sports.

Bearing Witness

Burke (1952-1995) was a little more than 6 feet tall and a lean 220 pounds when selected as Northern California's High School Basketball Player of the Year in 1970. A gifted athlete, Burke accepted a scholarship to the University of Denver, but after only three months there, returned home to Oakland, Calif. The Los Angeles Dodgers recruited Burke in 1972. He played on Dodger farm teams in Utah, Washington, Connecticut, and New Mexico before the Dodgers called him up to the major leagues in 1976.

He played outfield in the 1977 World Series, and in that series, he is credited with giving the first "high five" in sports. Things began falling apart when allegations began surfacing, like a hydra spreading its tentacles, that Burke was gay. Rumors of this kind were too much for Dodger management to bear. According to The Glenn Burke Page on the Internet (www.lambda.net/~maximum/burke.html), "The management of the Dodgers had offered to pay for a luxurious honeymoon if Burke would agree to a 'marriage of convenience' to conceal his homosexuality."

Burke remained single and was traded to the Oakland Athletics. He returned back home again. This time, however, it was going from the proverbial frying pan into the fire. Frustrated, Burke quit the team in 1979, became addicted to drugs, and at one point was on the streets, no home to return to. He had played three years in the "big time," but it wasn't his number of years in the game that pleased Burke. In a 1995 *Philadelphia Inquirer* interview, Burke proudly announced: "They can't ever say now that a gay man can't play in the majors, because I'm a gay man and I made it."

So he did. A 150-pound reminiscence of himself, Burke died in 1995 of complications related to AIDS. Given Burke's situation, an unasked question looms in the air like a dark cloud waiting to be pierced: Who will step up to the plate, take the ball, and run with it, or give a slam dunk for gay rights?

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Lyte, Tyte, & ready to roll

Atlanta's motorcycle club for women wheels out plans for cancer awareness ride.

We're doing some things to put the guys in their places!" exclaims Director of Lyte-N-Tyte, Mashonda Gilmore, nickname d "Smokey." What started in 1997 as a group of friends tossing around a football, quickly became a formally organized flag football team—the Lyte-N-Tyte Lady Warriors. "The first year we got together, we started playing flag football and had no idea of how to play. A lot of the women with us are career-oriented women—computer engineers, civil engineers—all walks of life. And we started to develop a team, even though we started off without a coach."

That first year, the Lady Warriors won the Georgia Women's Flag Football League Championships, following that, they finished fifth in the U.S. Flag and Touch Football League National Tournament. The team continued to reign with league titles in 2000 and 2001 as well as a fourth-place win at the International Women's Flag Football Association in Key West, Fla. In Key West, Gilmore was pleasantly surprised by the Lady Warriors fan base. "They followed us to Key West, and it was unbelievable. the people were wearing the bandanas and T-shirts of Lyte-N-Tyte!"

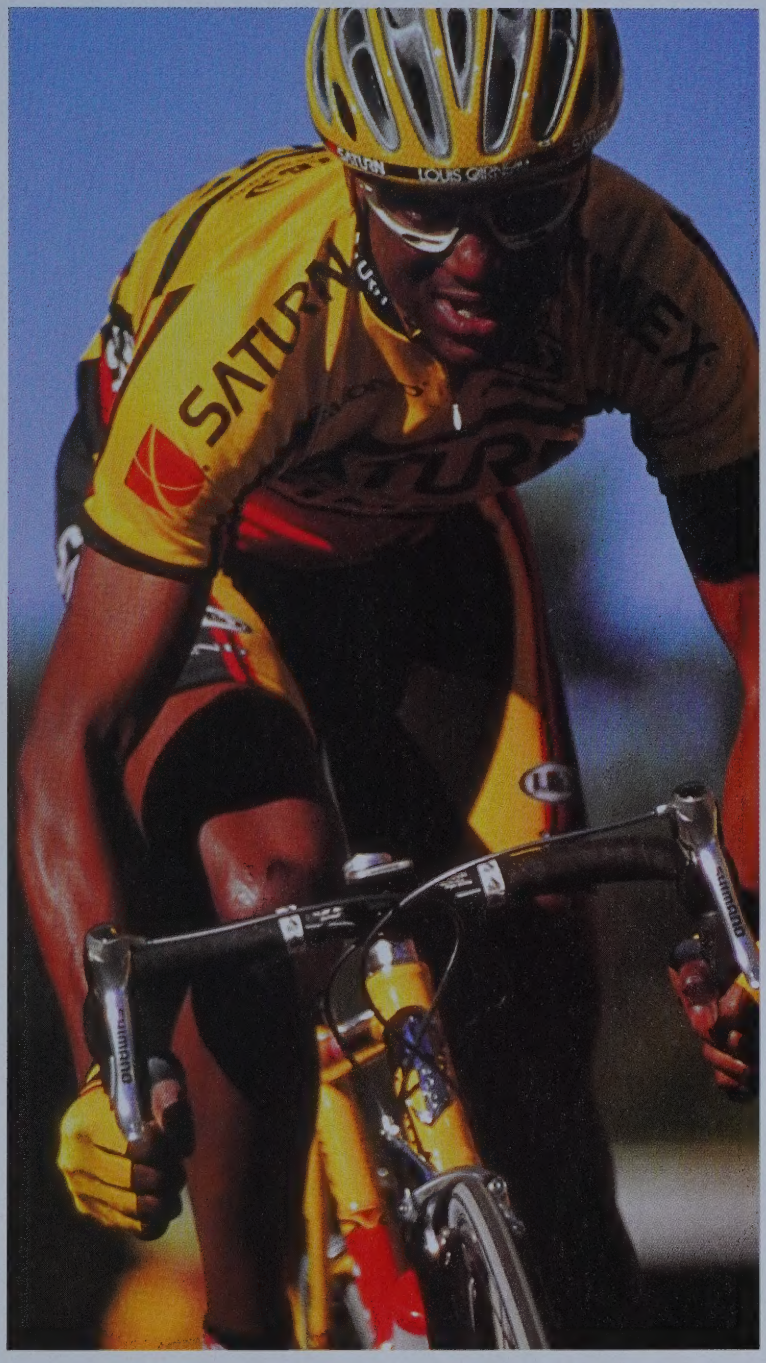
In addition to forming a basketball club on the heels of their success on the football field, Lyte-N-Tyte has started a mentoring program. "I want to promote the ladies who have been left behind, and have basically been unnoticed," says Gilmore. "We're getting out in the community now—working with kids." Now, Lyte-N-Tyte is rolling into new adventures by creating a motorcycle club for women who ride motorcycles/motorbikes or scooters. Their mission is to unite all women motorcycle enthusiasts for recreation, education, mutual support, recognition, and to promote a positive image of motorcycling.

This Memorial Day, the Lyte-N-Tyte motorcycle club is going to hold its Annual Ride Across Atlanta, to raise money for the American Cancer Society. "We have a couple of players who have had bad experiences as far as parents and close relatives dying of cancer, and [they] want to do a good benefit. We're going to honor our mothers, and we're going to do a benefit for breast cancer."

"We're going to start here with a tour of Atlanta because there are a lot of hot spots in Atlanta where bikers go—a lot of males." says Gilmore. "So it's going to be a big experience where the guys are going to be looking—they are going to be like, where did all of those women with these bikes come from?"

Contact Mashonda Gilmore if you have a bike and wish to participate;call 678/300-6771 or 770/220-5305. She can also be reached at: Mashonda.gilmore@fema.gov.

rashaan bahati



the baddest thing on 2 wheels!

The newest member to the Saturn Cycling Team--the #1 men's team in the United States and the #1 women's tram in the world is Rahsaan Bahati. He hopes to follow in the footsteps of his hero, Marshall "Major" Taylor (1878-1932), America's first Black world champion cyclist whose career of nearly 168 races included 117 first place finishes and several world records. Bahati has the distinction of being the only African-American professional cyclist in the country today.

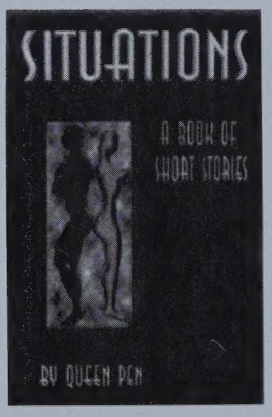
From Los Angeles, Ca. Rahsaan began racing in 1996 and decided to devote himself full time to the sport in 1998, although off season he continues his education at Indiana University in Indianapolis, home of the Major Taylor Velodrome, where he often trains. He is majoring in computer animation and telecommunications.

Rahsaan joined the Saturn Cycling Team after proving himself a winner in the Junior National Road Racing and National Criterium Championships in 2000 and the 2000 National Elite Criterium Champion while still in the junior ranks. He has gone on to represent the United States at the World Championships as both a junior and a senior cyclist.

With his strength as a sprinter, the Saturn Cycling Team will look to Rahsaan in the final 100 meters of the races to exact his lightening finishing speed.

photography and styling by
Natasha Papadopalou
hair & make up by Sylvia Dimaki
model, Farah

Queen Pens her story



Situations by Queen Pen

QP Piblications ISBN 0-9714246-0-8

Situations presents eight edgy, sassy, and compassionate stories about love, sexuality, loyalty, death, and the streets. "There's not much difference between writing a book and writing rhymes –just that a book is longer. Rhymes are a reflection of life and so are the books I write," says rapper, street philosopher, and now self-published author Queen Pen. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., Lynise Walters, aka Queen Pen, began writing short stories at the tender age of 10. By age 14, she was rapping and writing rhymes and dreaming of becoming a superstar. By age 15, Queen Pen was a teenage mother, forced to find her own way and survive in the mean streets of New York. Then in 1992 after hooking up with Teddy Riley she finally tasted success with the chart-topping hit, *No Diggity*. *Situations* is written in a style that conveys the strength of modern, urban storytelling. It is colorful, honest, and thoroughly entertaining.

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Addicted
by Zane Price
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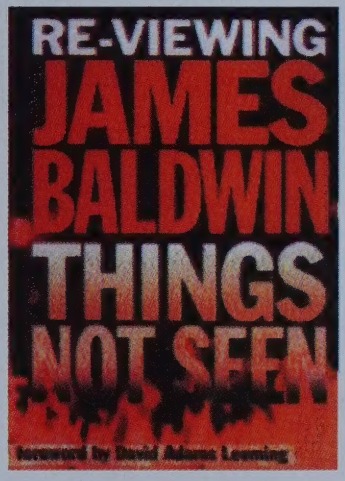
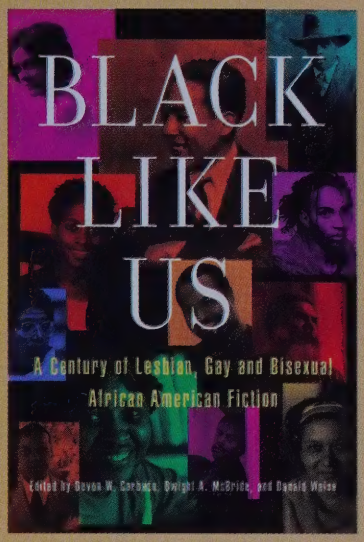
For successful African-American businesswoman Zoë Reynard, finding the pleasure she wants, the way she wants it, is not worth the risk of losing everything she has: marriage to the man she has loved since childhood, a thriving company, three wonderful children. But Zoë feels helpless in the grip of an overpowering addiction ... to sex.

Finding a compassionate woman therapist to help her, Zoë finally summons the courage to tell her torrid story, a tale of guilt and desire as shocking as it is compelling. From the sensitive artist with whom she spends stolen hours on rumpled sheets to the rough and violent man who draws her toward destruction, Zoë is a woman desperately searching for fulfillment–and something darker, deeper, and perhaps deadly. Author Zane Price is a professional African-American woman who resides in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area. She is also the author of *The Sex Chronicles: Shattering the Myth* and the web mistress of *EroticaNoir.com.*

Re-Viewing James Baldwin
by D. Quentin Miller
Temple Univ.Press
ISBN1-56639-736-7



This collection of essays presents a critical reappraisal of James Baldwin's work, looking beyond the commercial and critical success of some of Baldwin's early writings, such as *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *Notes of a Native Son.* Focusing on Baldwin's critically undervalued early works and the virtually neglected later ones, the contributors illuminate little-known aspects of this daring author's work, and highlight his accomplishments as an experimental writer. As volume editor, D. Quentin Miller, notes, "What has been lost is a complete portrait of Baldwin's tremendously rich intellectual journey that illustrates the direction of African-American thought and culture in the late 20th century."



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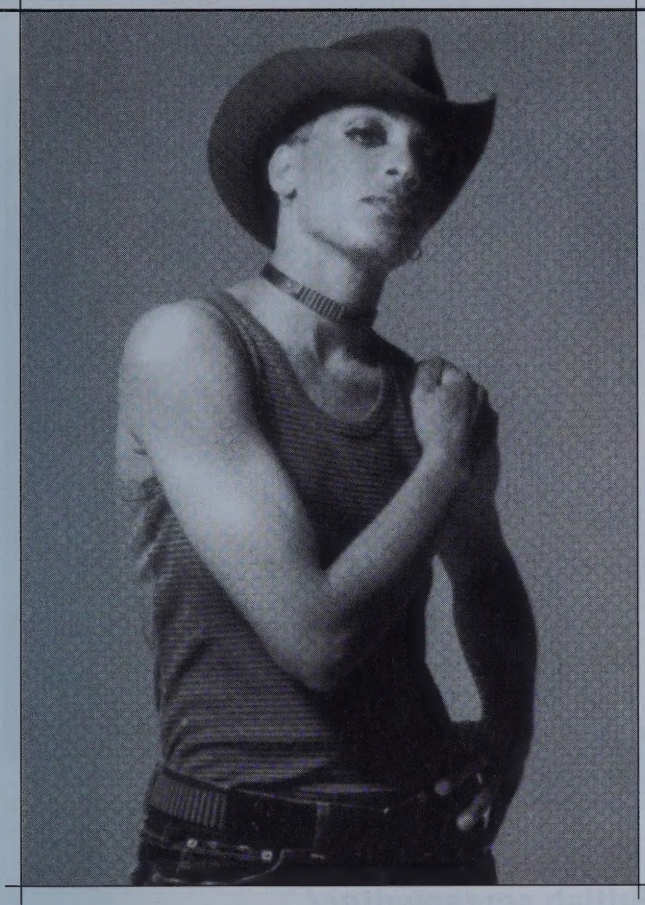


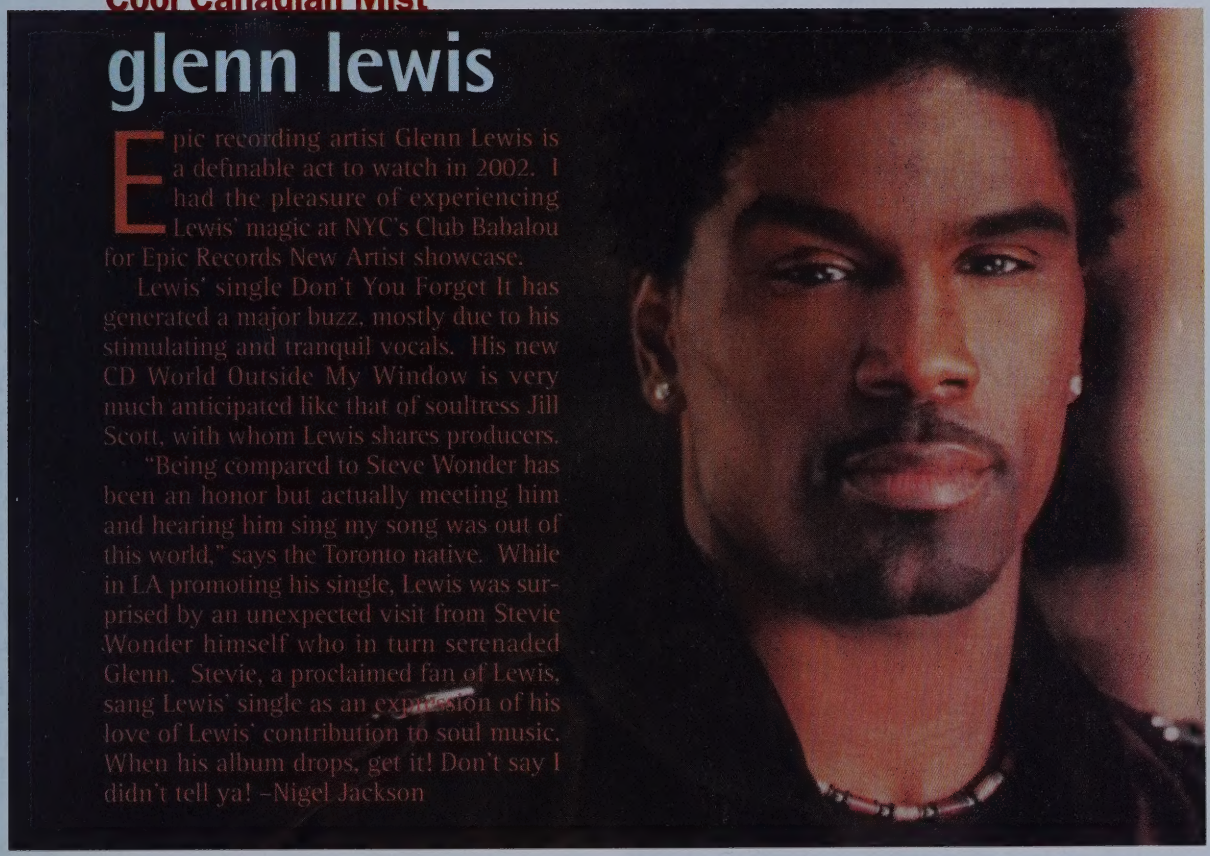
freckles

"I can take my guitar anywhere."

Standing 5'10", red hair, hypnotic green eyes, face dusted with brown angel kisses, from which her name derives, Freckles decided at an early age that she wanted to share her musical passion and gift with the world. "I started playing the piano when I was young and found it did not let my creativity flow. So I picked up the acoustic guitar. I can take my guitar anywhere." Her new album *Doesn't Really Matter,* released on Universal Records, illustrates her artistic range and unique sound. Soulful bass lines wrapped with deep vocals and a hard funky sound distributed over head-bobbing beats puts Freckles in an elite category of musicians.

Cool Canadian Mist

glenn lewis



Epic recording artist Glenn Lewis is a definable act to watch in 2002. I had the pleasure of experiencing Lewis' magic at NYC's Club Babalou for Epic Records New Artist showcase.

Lewis' single Don't You Forget It has generated a major buzz, mostly due to his stimulating and tranquil vocals. His new CD World Outside My Window is very much anticipated like that of soultress Jill Scott, with whom Lewis shares producers.

"Being compared to Steve Wonder has been an honor but actually meeting him and hearing him sing my song was out of this world," says the Toronto native. While in LA promoting his single, Lewis was surprised by an unexpected visit from Stevie Wonder himself who in turn serenaded Glenn. Stevie, a proclaimed fan of Lewis, sang Lewis' single as an expression of his love of Lewis' contribution to soul music. When his album drops, get it! Don't say I didn't tell ya! –Nigel Jackson

metro sexuality

review by Malcolm Venable

British screenwriter/ director releases DVD/VHS featuring black gay family series.

"All they need is one gay program, and they don't consider that there may be black gay people, or vegetarian gay people, or punk gay people."

Everyone agrees that Showtime's series *Queer as Folk* is groundbreaking and engrossing, but that doesn't mean it comes without a fair share of complaints. Gay women, for example, say the lesbians take a backseat to the men; men say the show illustrates only one facet of gay life. But the unilateral complaint among people of color is that the show well, lacks people of color.

As somewhat of an antithesis (or anecdote) to the glowstick-toting blonde boys in bikinis on *Queer as Folk* comes the series *Metrosexuality*, the latest TV import from jolly gay Britian. Like its Channel 4 big sister, the show is a campy and racy romp through gay life. Only this time, this story about "family" cooks with soul food. Actually, *Metrosexuality*, being released on DVD and VHS this May, is about a family–a black one. It follows the trials and triumphs of Max, the fabulously gay father of an 18-year-old straight son living in Notting Hill, London. As the series opens, Max (a funky disco-era queen with blond dreadlocks and a pink Wrangler Jeep) has split with his hubby Jordan, Kwame's other dad. Kwame tries amusingly to reunite them and in addition to the family drama, one of Kwame's best mates (both gay and white) has a crush on Max. Max's gay sister and her lover are trying to recapture a lost flame; Kwame is infatuated with a girl who might prefer girls herself; and one of Kwame's buddies is being abused at home. Max, played by series writer and director Rikki Beadle-Blair, ends up playing surrogate mother to his son's friends, untangling his own friends' troubles and being the overall fierce, in-command glue that binds the eccentric cliques together.

Blair says the "multi-cultural, ambi-sexual" series portrays another dimension of gay life unnoticed in other shows like its British counterpart. "All they need," he told a British news service, "is one gay program, and they don't consider that there may be black gay people, or vegetarian gay people, or punk gay people."

Indeed, differences between the shows abound. Besides having black characters, *Metroseuxuality* distinguishes itself from its white-bread counterpart in myriad ways. It's a much more edgy, fast, flashy, and animated show with, admittedly, far better-dressed characters. The lesbian sex is as intense as the men's; people use drugs openly; and blacks and whites enter relationships without tired racial politics becoming an issue. It is truly unlike any other TV show you've ever seen. Audiences agree: It got rave reviews following screenings at Philadelphia's *International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival*, San Francisco's *Frameline* and *Outfest* in Los Angeles.

Now that Beadle-Blair has infiltrated select American audiences with his 21st century look at life, he now hopes to bring his program to U.S. television screens. He just completed a script for an hour-long pilot and is shopping the program around. While he admits that the show would be best suited for a cable show, he isn't ruling out more mainstream outlets. "I would love to have it on network television," he said, "to break down that barrier."

Some of the men in the documentary were invited to speak at the New York City premiere. [l-r] Larry Banks-retired corporate executive, Melvin Deal-Founder of African Heritage Dancers and Drummers, and Buddy Sutson-retired military officer.

sheila wise

documentary
a different kind of black man

"I was forced to question my own upbringing, socialization process, and how that process has shaped my views of manhood and masculinity." –Sheila Wise

By day, Sheila Wise is an ethnography strategist. "We do consumer behavior research," says the pint-sized videographer from Washington, D.C. By night, she's a budding documentary producer whose documentary short entitled *A Different Kind of Black Man* is making waves across the country. "It was actually a part of my dissertation: the paradoxical position of socially responsible black gay men in the black community."

A Different Kind of Black Man features nine men ranging in age from 30 to 70. In the 18-minute video, the men discuss their sexuality, masculinity, and their perceptions of and role within the black community. *A Different Kind of Black Man* adds a much-needed dimension to the discussion of homosexuality-it puts a "face" on the topic and in doing so, dispels some of the myths and negative stereotypes that have been projected by the media," Wise said.

The short aired on a local Washington, D.C., public access television station and was screened as part of Filmfest DC (DC's international film festival) and recently to a packed house in New York in conjunction with GMAD, Gay Men of African Descent. A few of the men in the video attended the New York screening and participated in an open discussion.

"As a physician, on this journey through school even into my private practice, I've had to put up with a lot of junk," said Dr.Theo Hodge "But I have support of family and surround myself with positive imagery. And I get through it.

"I know that I'm a different kind of Black man, says Melvin Deal, "but straight men call gay men punks. How much more of a punk can you be than to father children you never even care for? How many Black gay men are taking care of other men's children?"

continued on page 85

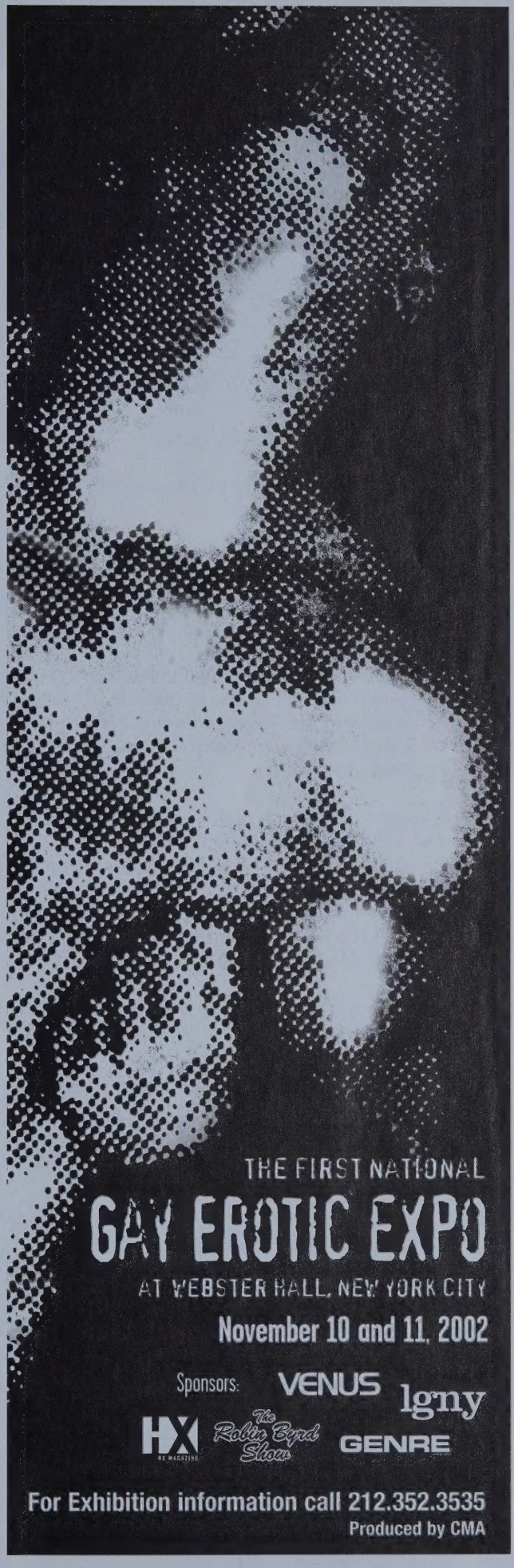
Isaac Julien Honored

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts presents *The Film Art of Isaac Julien*, the West Coast debut of video and film projects by one of Britain's preeminent filmmakers, including multiple screen projections and related photography. This major international exhibition organized by the Center for Curatorial Studies Museum, Bard College, New York has previously toured to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Bildmuseet Umeå, Sweden; and Henie-Onstad, Norway. YBCA Wattis Artist-in-Residence Isaac Julien emerged among the talented new wave of independent black filmmakers in the 1980s, earning international recognition for his visually seductive works that explore and subvert stereotypes of gay and black subjects.

Known primarily for his films—the controversial, award-winning *Looking for Langston*; *Young Soul Rebels*, winner of the Semaine de la Critique Prize at the Cannes Film Festival; and the stunning drama-documentary, *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*—Julien has further evolved his practice through the use of multiple-screen installations. *The Film Art of Isaac Julien* is on view through July 14, 2002.

At a private reception preceding the opening night party for the exhibition, Isaac Julien will be presented the prestigious Frameline Award. Frameline, presenters of the San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, bestows the award each year to a filmmaker who represents the leading edge of gay and lesbian cinema. Previous winners of the Frameline Award include Barbara Hammer, Marlon Riggs, Stanley Kwan, and Christine Vachon, among others. In conjunction with the award, Frameline will screen a retrospective of Julien's film work during the festival, which runs from June 13–30, 2002.

The Film Art of Isaac Julien presents a related series of Julien's multiple-screen installations, which form a trilogy: *The Attendant* (1993), *Trussed* (1996), and *Three (The Conservator's Dream)* (1996-99). Also included is Julien's most recent installation, *The Long Road to Mazatlán* (1999). Photographs and prints from these works will also be on view.



Borris Powell

If Angels Wore Black High Heels

If angels wore black high heels
And looked like me
Would you still want to go to heaven?
Or choose hell instead?

If angels wore black high heels (and they do)
Would you miss the message?

I have nothing to say to you
I have nothing to say to anyone
Because if angels wore black high heels (and they do)
I'd have the power to speak directly to your soul.
I'd be able to reach over your insecurities
Directly through your pain
And feel your spirit.

If angels wore black high heels (and they do)
And delivered a message about
Destigmatizing HIV, race, gender, and homosexuality
Then you would listen to what I have to say
Because I would have the power to redirect your thinking.
I'd have the power to remind you how to be humane
To humankind

If angels wore black high heels (and they do)
And were big black men with shaven heads
Would you love me?
Would you know how?

Inhale ... now exhale
I welcome you to recognize your true self.
Inhale ... I breathe in your inhibitions
(Exhale) and blow them back at you.

Inhale ... I breathe in your imperfections.
(Exhale) and make you an example for all who follow.
Inhale ... I breathe in your human love and concern
(Exhale) and give it back to you more abundantly.

If angels wore black high heels (and they do)
Then you are already closer to heaven
Than you thought.

performed by Borris Powell

A Different View of Heaven

words by LeRoy Whitfield

Even if he were standing in a crowd, it wouldn't be hard to point out Borris Powell. Especially on days when the 6-foot-tall, 200-pound, 43-year-old is outfitted in black latex, wearing 8-inch pumps and spitting peaceful prose to the masses. Powell has summoned his East Coast-inspired alter ego for audiences at Jewish synagogues, Catholic convents, and black art museums to roaring applause. His signature performance piece, *If Angels Wore Black High Heels*, challenges listeners' stereotypes about HIV, among other things, and is the cornerstone of a work-in-progress that Powell is producing for a one-man show.

Until he debuts under the bright lights of Chicago's Theater District, Powell keeps a day job in the city as a MOCHA (Men of Color HIV/AIDS) partnership representative at a local AIDS service agency and oft volunteers as a facilitator of an HIV support group. Asked about his own HIV status, his replies are as ambiguous as the nature of his stage character. "Like so many of my people, I'm officially not talking about it," he says. "Everybody has an HIV status. So do I."

Borris Powell is one of more than nearly 70 people photographed in *The Faces of AIDS*, a new book published by the Chicago Department of Public Health. For more information, contact managing editor Cydne Perhats at 312/747-9656.

"Everybody has an HIV status. So do I."

peaceful living at Jumby Bay

words by Walter Greene

I first heard of Jumby Bay back in the day, when shock jock radio personality Howard Stern constantly rambled on about this being the only place he really likes to spend his vacation every year. Jumby Bay has gone through some changes since then, like new ownership and a completely refurbished program. Recently purchased by the highly successful Half Moon Golf, Tennis & Beach Club, and reopened under new management with Heinz Simonitsch at the helm, Jumby Bay is now a polished gem of beauty, serenity, and first-class service.

Jumby Bay shines as one of the Caribbean's best-kept secrets for peaceful living and a vacation paradise like none other. The late singer Aaliyah was among the select few "in the know" who enjoyed staying on Jumby Bay. Celebrity homeowners on the island include Robin Leach, Lord and Lady Saintsbury, British novelist Ken Follet, and The Franklins of the English Banking Empire.

getting there

When the opportunity came to visit Jumby Bay as a guest of Elegant Resorts International, my bags were packed. Jumby Bay is actually a private 300-acre island resort located off the northern coast of Antigua in the West Indies. BWIA West Indies Airlines flies directly into Antigua's Vere C. Bird International Airport, and after a five-minute drive from the airport to Beachcomber dock, a luxury boat whisked guests to Jumby Bay during a seven-minute ride.

history

West Indians familiar with the word "Jumby" know that it means ghost. Well, the folks at Jumby Bay are real people; a team of warm-hearted and pleasurable professionals. "Jumby actually means friendly spirit in Arawak, and that is befitting this warm and welcoming place," general manager Rudi Schoenbein explained.

Proof positive were the beautiful anthuriams that are presented to the ladies as they arrive on the dock of Jumby Bay and the welcome bottles of champagne and rum in each of the villas for arriving guests. Not to mention the warm smiles and helpful hints from the staff to all arriving guests.

Lush tropical flowers and trees adorn this haven for naturalists. Three glorious beaches with hazy

"Jumby actually means 'friendly spirit' in Arawak, and that is befitting this warm and welcoming place. Proof positive were the beautiful anthuriams that are presented to the ladies as they arrive on the dock and the welcome bottles of champagne and rum in each of the villas for arriving guests."

hazy palm trees and swaying hammocks are nested among winding paths lined with wild orchids and scenic botanic gardens. Pasture Bay Beach, on the island's windward side, is the home to endangered species of turtles. On nights when these huge turtles come ashore to lay eggs, guests are invited to witness the process.

accommodations

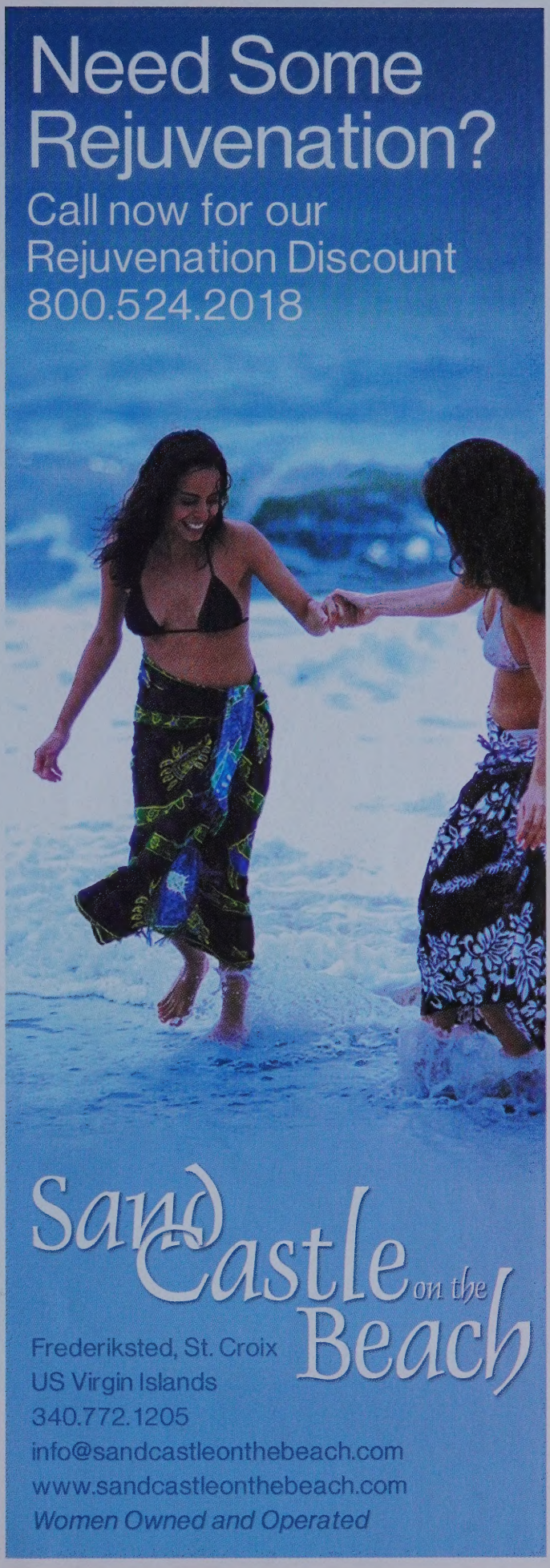
There is no vehicular traffic on Jumby Bay. Guests receive bicycles and golf carts to get around. There are 50 luxurious accommodations on this island hideaway, including 39 suites and 11 villas.

I was housed in a magnificent two-bedroom villa featuring a sunken living room with elegant, modern décor. The large terrace opened out to the beach and a huge kitchen flecked with state-of-the-art appliances let into an enormous dining room with a big table that seats 10. A breezy lanai and a lavish open bathroom set in a lush tropical garden gave this villa space an opulent touch. Amenities included a CD player, designer toiletries, cable television and a VCR. A massive four-poster canopy bed complete with antique netting dominated the spacious master bedroom.

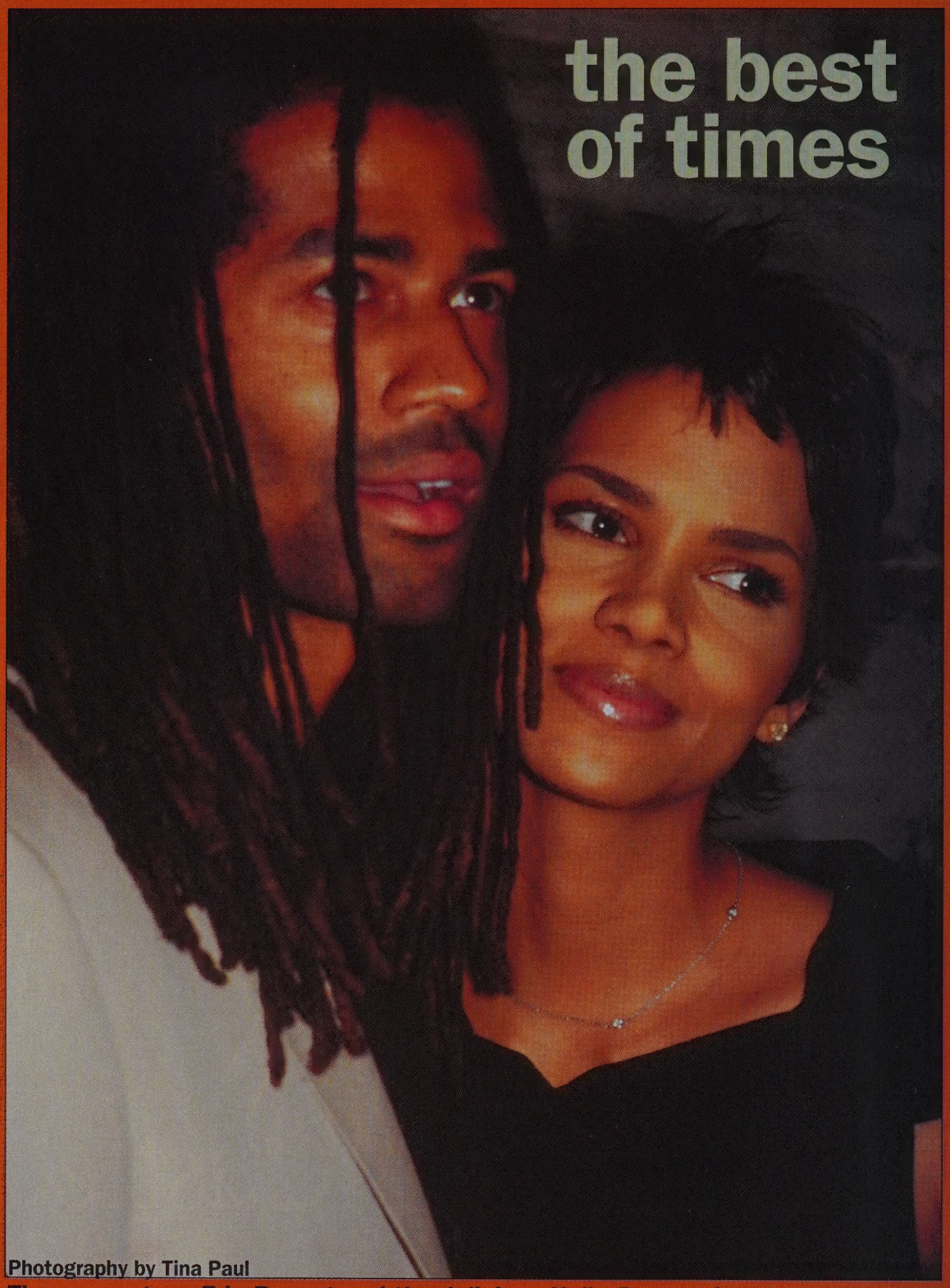
For health and fitness buffs, Jumby Bay offers a unique open-air fitness gazebo, four and a half miles of hiking trails, a 25 meter lap pool, three tennis courts (two of which are lit for night play), a croquet court, a putting green, and select board games. Spa services are available including reflexology and massage in one of five open-air gazebos.

dining and entertainment

Schoenbein assured me that there is a friendly ghost named Charlie at the Great House, which is where the fine dining restaurant on Jumby Bay is located. The dining experience at Jumby Bay is one of culinary delight. Breakfast, lunch, and casual light-fare dinner, spiced with sunset cocktails, are all served at the romantic open-air Verandah Beach Restaurant, offering spectacular views of the ocean. The Wednesday night beach barbeque is a lavish feast unlike any beach barbeque I've experienced. Dinner is also served six nights a week at Jumby Bay's Estate House. This Greathouse is actually a 230-year-old English plantation manor, where the cuisine of the Caribbean is fused with European and American fare, for a totally exceptional treat. However, the jewels in the food crown are the Jumby Bay pastries and desserts that truly take you to another gastronomical dimension.



the best of times



Photography by Tina Paul

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Should we or should we not use The N-Word?

words by The Rev. Irene Monroe

The word "nigger" that was once hurled at a specific group of people in this country and banned from polite conversation now have a broad-base cultural acceptance in our society today.

Professor Randall Kennedy at Harvard Law school poses an important yet troubling question about its popular use in American culture today.

While it is easy to get sidetracked by raising queries about the tenor and intent of Kennedy's promotion of the use of the word, we cannot ignore the moral and ethical issues this word raises for all of us who want to be responsible, inclusive, and well intended in our use of language. The bantering and bickering over this word today is no longer about who has been harmed or hurt by its use, but who has the right to use it.

In my opinion, our cavalier use of the n-word speaks less about our rights to free speech and more about how we as a people-both white and Black Americans-have become anesthetized to the damaging and destructive use of epithets, and our ignorance of their historical origins.

Is it appropriate for people to use this epithet if they do or do not belong to the group it was originally intended for? Does reclaiming the n-word serve as an act of group agency or as a form of resistance against the dominate culture's use of it?

The word "nigger" is firmly embedded in the lexicon of racist language that's used to disparage African Americans. And I argue that the word can no more be eradicated from the American lexicon than it can be from the American psyche.

Does African Americans' appropriation of the term as insiders obliterate not only the historical baggage fraught with the word but its concomitant social relations among blacks, and between whites and Blacks as well? Does hearing other African Americans use the term among themselves give them as well as other ethnic groups the license to use it?

Because some African Americans use the term, it does not negate its origin to slavery, or this country's continued hatred toward African Americans as well as African Americans' long history of self-hatred.

Because language is a representation of culture, it reinscribes and perpetuates ideas and assumptions about race, gender, and sexual orientation we consciously and unconsciously articulate in our everyday conversations about ourselves and the rest of the world, and consequently transmit generationally.

A Boston brouhaha over April's (1998) headline in *Boston Magazine* profiling Henry Louis 'Skip' Gates, chairman of the African-American Studies and director of the W.E.B.Dubois Center at Harvard University, as the recent "Head Negro In Charge" of the Black intellectual enterprise in this country had reached national proportions and had once again opened a dialogue about the word.

The title "Head Negro In Charge" where the 'N' doesn't stand for "Negro," but instead the other n-word, and in common parlance among African Americans is referred to by its initials 'HNIC' derives from an abuse of power where a white slave owner chose a field slave as his overseer to maintain his relations of racial and labor exploitations. In keeping his fellow enslaved laborers in their place, the overseer was also kept in place because his survival was dependent on executing the demands of his master. Today, the term in black vernacular still conveys and maintains the same power inequities where the white establishment chooses one African American as a spokesperson and gate keeper for the entire race.

The notion that it is acceptable for African Americans to refer to each other as "Negroes" or "niggers" yet consider it racist for others unquestionably sets up a double standard. The notion that one ethnic group has property rights to a term is a reductio ad absurdum argument since language is a public enterprise. No one -Black or white-escapes the stranglehold of racist language and images whether reclaimed or left alone. As African-Caribbean poet Audre Lorde cautioned us all, we cannot use the master's tool to dismantle his house. Although the liberation of a people is also rooted in the liberation of language reclaiming a racist word like nigger does not eradicate its historical baggage, and its existing racial relations among us.

Instead it dislodges the word from its historical context and makes us insensitive and arrogant to the historical injustice done to a specific group of Americans. It allows all Americans to become unconscious and numb in the use and abuse of the power of language because of the currency this racial epithet still has, and it thwarts the daily struggle many Americans work hard at in trying to ameliorate race relations.

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New World, Gay Athletes
continued from page 61

Who will pay the price? Is it worth it?

There have been moments of hope as rumors swept through the family about some Don Quixote, lance in hand, who was ready to attack the cloud. In 1984, the flavor of the year was Carl Lewis, the super athlete in track and field who won four gold medals in that year's summer Olympics. Of course, track and field is not a team sport, but you have to start someplace. Rumors of Lewis' "sexuality" ran around the circuit even faster than Lewis did. After the Olympics, loaded with gold, Lewis torpedoed a reporter who broached the subject: "I could be sleeping with a horse for all they [rumormongers] know. I'm not homosexual." That was that. Case closed.

Hope springs eternally in the human breast. Almost 20 years later, in the waning decade of the 1990s, hydra threw its rumor tentacles at Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Kordell Stewart. The buzz was on when Coach Bill Cowher benched Stewart in a game on national television and the quarterback, it appeared, began crying copious tears, catching them in a lavender hankie some wag quipped. The story sounds apocryphal, but there are sports fans who swear they saw it–sans the hankie.

Stewart didn't follow Lewis' example but took the high road, saying that his personal life was nobody's business but his own. He wouldn't discuss the rumors swirling around him, gathering the force of a tornado. It almost mimicked *The Contender*, the movie in which a vice presidential candidate wouldn't discuss her sex life. Unlike the heroine in that film, Stewart faltered on his principled position and met with his teammates in a now-famous closed locker room session, with his coach, and with the Steelers owner. But it was not enough to dispel growing rumors. In a Jan. 14, 2002, issue of *Sports Illustrated*, Michael Silver reported that Stewart denied being a homosexual at the locker room meeting and gave graphic details of what he sexually liked, then dared his teammates to leave their girlfriends alone with him. An account of the *Sports Illustrated* interview is retold, with commentary, in *Outsports* (http://www.outsports.com/wire/kordell.htm).

That still leaves a dark cloud looming. One readily understands the reason athletes should do their jobs on the playing field while exploring their gay life off it. One also understands that nothing will change unless someone pays the terrible price for making change. To paraphrase Essex Hemphill: Every time the out athlete makes a play, he confirms the new world coming.

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Different Kind of Black Man
continued from page 74

A visiting audience participant commented about the lack of black [gay] community in Denver. "Black gay men will push past me to get to a white or Latino gay man. I have to travel to the East coast to get a sense of black gay male community."

"Community doesn't just happen," responds___us helping us guy----. "It takes work! Even in the Chocolate City [Washington, DC] there are challenges. Like getting black men to come out for more than a party. Find one other brother in Denver and then another and keep meeting together until you are meetings each other's needs."

Frameline Distributors in San Francisco recently acquired distribution rights of A Different Kind of Black Man. Wise is hopeful that this will get the video on television (PBS), home video and in festivals.

Wise considers the process of making the video a learning experience. "I was forced to question my own upbringing, i.e., socialization process and how that process has shaped my views of manhood and masculinity. By this I mean, as a black heterosexual woman, I was/am considered 'the norm.' However, hearing the experiences of the black gay men revealed life for those 'outside the norm.' To order visit www.frameline.org/titles/different_kind.html

Gordon James
continued from page 19

Realising his work has an important message to humankind, James says that the bottom line is all about love. "The premise of the show is love. It's universal whether you are young, black, gay, or straight and the poems all speak to that. It's a totally universal vibe." Admitting that his favourite character is Grayson because of his message of friendship, James obviously loves all of his characters. "Like I love Vixen because she is aggressive and overpowering. The drag queen character, Alexis, is the most extreme in terms of costuming; she utilizes the extreme prop. All of the poems in the show profoundly affect my audiences. The taxi poem really hits a nerve with all of the Black men in the audience. I am constantly thrilled by Black men telling me that was 'their' story. That's what thrills me about what I do. It makes all my work worthwhile."

James has written poetry for the last three years and has appeared at The Nuyorican Poets Cafe, The Brooklyn Moon Cafe, and The New Black Theatre receiving glowing reviews of his one-man show. He is a repeat winner of "The Hottest Poetry Slam in Harlem," an award that afforded him a grant from the Aaron Davis Hall Fund for New Work with support from The Jerome Foundation and Philip Morris.

James is poised on the brink of his new show, which will tour in cities like Washington,D.C., Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, and of course, New York City. *OUTbursts* really is a must-see production that will forever be embedded in the psyche. For more information on these performances, check out the website at www.outbursts.net.

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Men, on the other hand, react in one of two ways: as a challenge to their manhood, as if I would attempt to 'beat them up' or 'What's a girl like you doing in a sport like this?' Over the six years that I have been in boxing, I have gotten a lot more positive reactions than not.

VENUS: Why did you decide to become a professional boxer?

ALICIA: It wasn't a momentous decision. I have a 2nd degree black belt in karate and I was already competing in kickboxing. I actually started boxing to get my hand skills better for kickboxing and realized how much I liked the sport. I'm a competitor.

VENUS: What would you say to anyone interested in becoming a boxer?

ALICIA: I'd definitely believe that if this is the sport you want to get into, you should. However, unlike non-contact sports, you can't participate half way. There is no way that you can sleepwalk through this sport. The second you believe you are too good, someone will be there to put you on the mat. Unlike team sports, your wins or loses are your own. Sure you have a coach in your corner, but ultimately your highs or lows, accolades, and criticism will be all yours. So you have to have a thick skin and strong self-esteem and belief in yourself to make a go of this sport.

VENUS: Does your boxing record indicate your true skills?

ALICIA: No. Not necessarily so. Too many boxers get their records 'padded' by fighting individuals way below their class, therefore amassing a 35-0 record before actually fighting a great fighter. That perception needs to change. With games such as baseball, basketball, football, soccer, hockey, etc., your record counts, but the title at the end of the season is the ultimate indication of your status as a true competitor and champion.

VENUS: Who are the most talked about women in professional boxing?"

ALICIA: The 'famous daughters: Ali, Frazier, etc.' These women do not have the boxing skills to carry the sport. None have gone through the amateurs nor have they paid their dues. There are many other women in the sport that can best represent it because of the very nature of their achievement, physical aptitude, and dedication to the sport. Because the press and networks promote these women in the news, the sport is taking much longer to generate the right kind of following. When avid fight fans watch these women on TV, all they see is a sideshow of unskilled perpetrators. I know that Ali and Frazier will eventually get better, but at this time, they aren't the ones that we need to see on ESPN.

VENUS: What would it take and what would have to be done for female boxers to get more recognition, more television exposure, and equal purses to their counterparts?

ALICIA: Only time will level the playing field. As with any other sport: tennis, golf, basketball it is a long road that women must travel to get the recognition they deserve. The television exposure and the purses might never be equal to the men, but it can get pretty close.

VENUS: What fight and against who, would you consider to be your most memorable, good or bad, and why?

ALICIA: My most memorable has been against Laura Serrano, a lightweight champion. It was my fourth fight that I lost by going up in weight class. I just wanted to fight and wasn't getting any in my weight class. Laura is a great fighter. I think she fought Christy Martin as her debut to a draw, so you know she is tenacious. She stalked me the whole fight and could hit pretty hard. I was very surprised. I realized now that I was in no way ready for her and that they have different weight classes for a reason. That was over two years ago and I've gotten much better. Recently I saw her on ESPN fighting at 124 and feel I'm definitely ready for her now.

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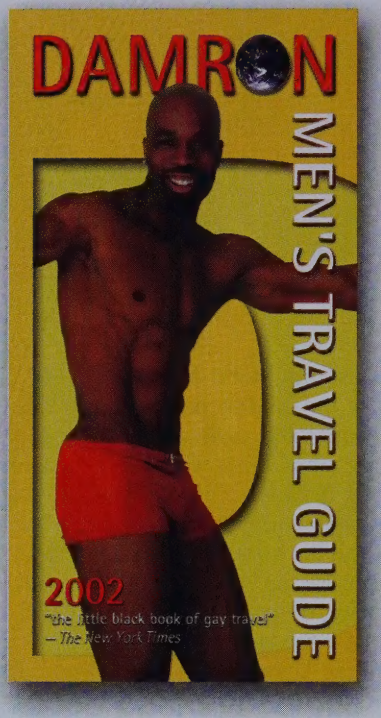

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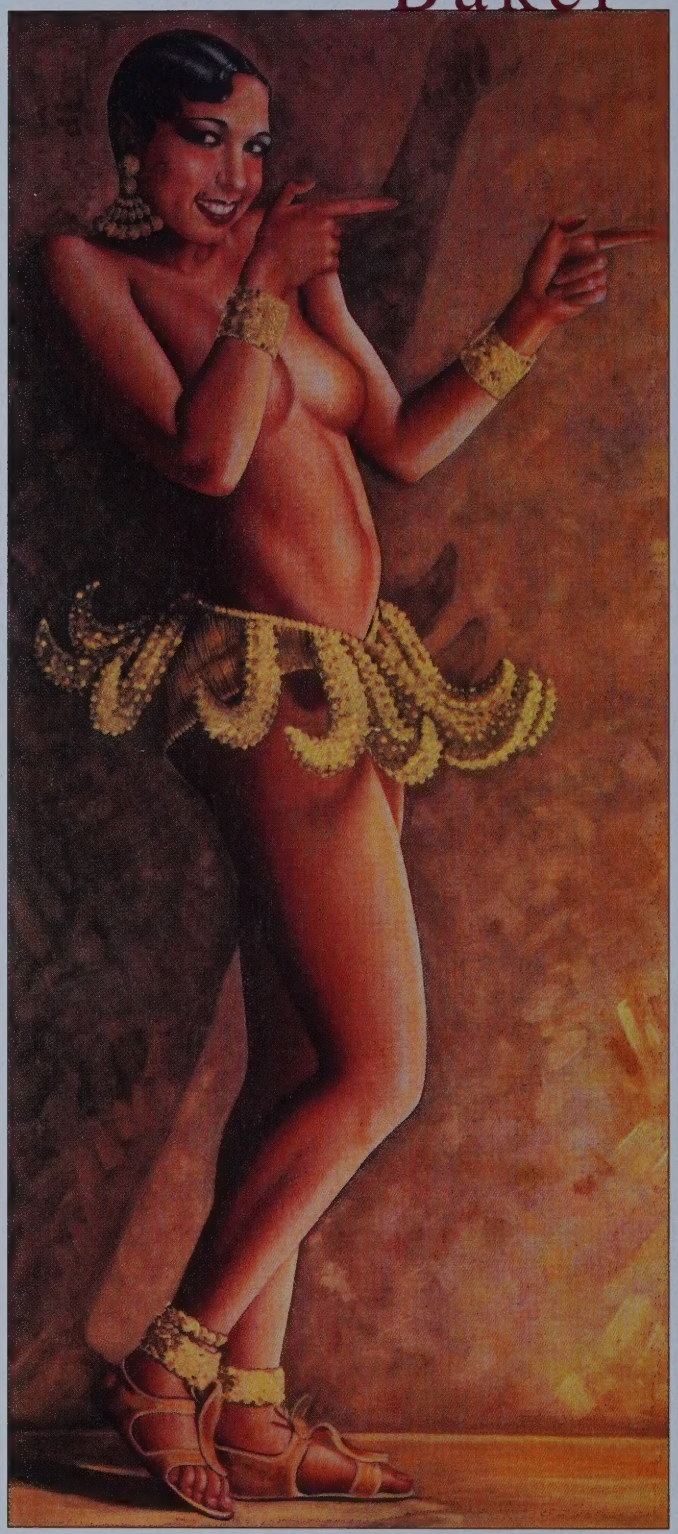

June 3, 1906 - April 12, 1975

Born Freda Josephine McDonald in St. Louis, Mo., she later took the name Baker from her stepfather. Surviving the 1917 riots in East St. Louis, Ill., where the family was living, she ran away at age 13 and began dancing in vaudeville and on Broadway. In 1925, she went to Paris where after the jazz revue *La Revue Nègre* failed, her comic ability and jazz dancing drew attention of the director of the *Folies Bergère.*

Virtually an instant hit, she became one of the best-known entertainers in both France and much of Europe. Her exotic, sensual act reinforced the creative images coming out of the Harlem Renaissance in America.

During World War II, Baker worked with the Red Cross, gathered intelligence for the French Resistance, and entertained troops in Africa and the Middle East.

After the war, she adopted, with her second husband, 12 children from around the world, making her home a World Village, a "showplace for brotherhood." She returned to the stage in the 1950s to finance this project.

In 1951 in the United States, she was refused service at the famous Stork Club in New York City. Yelling at columnist Walter Winchell, another patron of the club, for not coming to her assistance, she was accused by Winchell of communist and fascist sympathies. Never as popular in the United States as in Europe, she found herself fighting the rumors begun by Winchell as well. She responded by crusading for racial equality, refusing to entertain in any club or theater that was not integrated, and thereby breaking the color barrier at many establishments. In 1963, she spoke at the March on Washington at the side of Martin Luther King, jr.

Her World Village fell apart in the 1950s and in 1969 she was evicted from her chateau, which was then auctioned off to pay debts. Princess Grace of Monaco in turn gave her a villa. In 1973 Baker married an American, Robert Brady, and began her stage comeback.

In 1975, her Carnegie Hall comeback performance was a success, as was her subsequent Paris performance. But two days after her last Paris performance, she died of a stroke.

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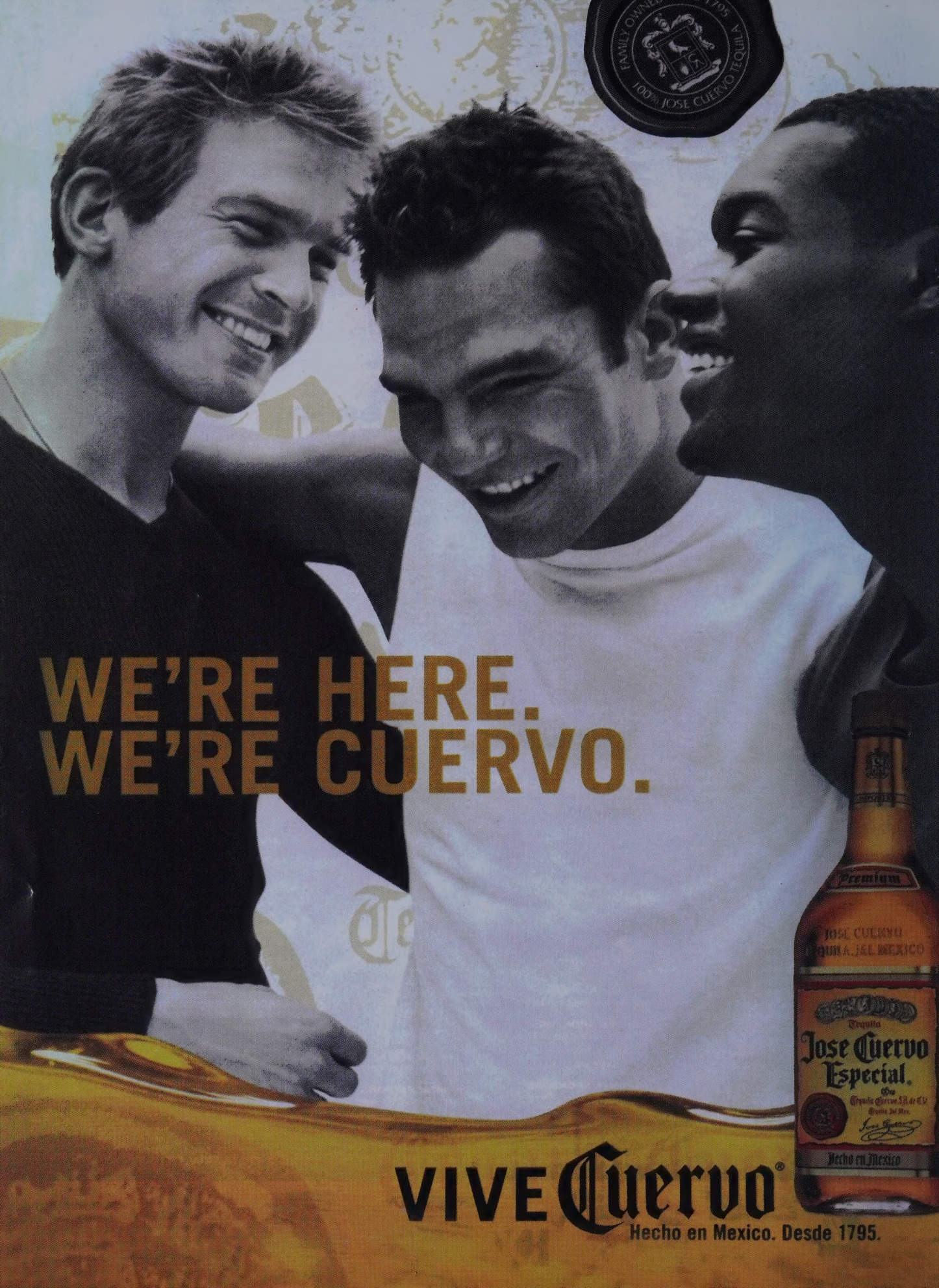
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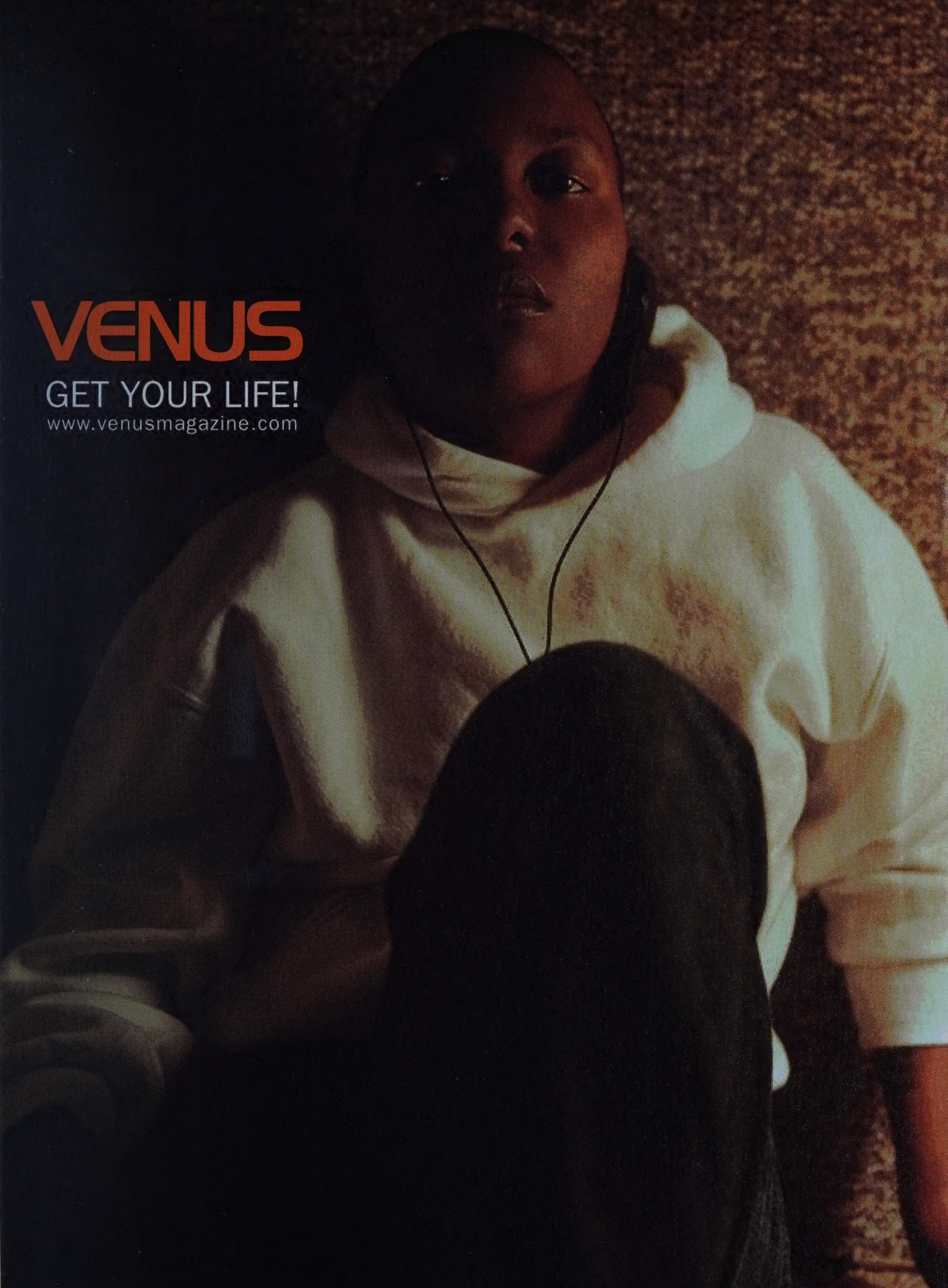
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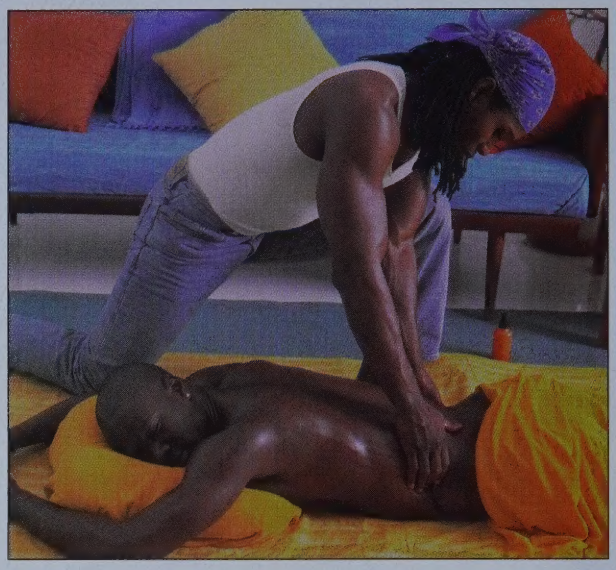

"Thank you so much for the article 'The Healing Art of Massage.'" I had been researching 'how-to' articles and I found most of them either too sensual or too technical to be practical. Your article was great."

Happy, Successful & Out

I just had to write you the evening I received the magazine. It had such an emotional effect on me. I didn't quite know how to express that without writing a novel. So, I would just like to say that I am very proud of *Venus*. My life is in a phase of great transition, and I know what it is like to step out on faith ... in yourself and God's plans for you. It was such a pleasure to see women who look like me and are happy, successful, and OUT. Thank you so much. You have no idea how much I needed this *now*!

Michelle Howard
Lawrenceville, GA

Practical Advice

Thank you so much for the article "The Healing Art of Massage" [Vol.8 No. 2, May 2002]. I had been researching "how-to" articles and I found most of them either too sensual or too technical to be practical. Your article was great. I really love *Venus*. Keep up the great work.

Sharon Clarkson
Arlington, VA

Sophisticated Lady

Enjoyed your article on my favorite Supreme, Mary Wilson [Vol. 8 No. 1, March 2002, "Sophisticated Mary"]. Ms. Wilson is definitely an inspiration to us all. She is what a survivor is all about. At 58 years old, she is so beautiful and so talented. Supreme work! Thanks a million.

Bill Seagreaves
Dallas, TX

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Pancreatitis and liver problems, which may cause death, have been reported in patients receiving KALETRA. Tell your doctor if you have or have had liver disease such as hepatitis. Your doctor may want to monitor your liver function. In patients taking protease inhibitors, increased bleeding (in patients with hemophilia) and diabetes/high blood sugar have occurred. Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients receiving antiretroviral therapy. Some patients receiving KALETRA have had large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.

The most commonly reported side effects of moderate or severe intensity are: abnormal bowel movements, diarrhea, feeling weak or tired, headache, and nausea. Children most often reported diarrhea, rash, taste aversion, and vomiting.

KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol.

Please see adjacent page for Patient Information.

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ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with KALETRA. Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

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What is KALETRA and how does it work?

KALETRA is a combination of two medicines. They are lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is a type of medicine called an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor. KALETRA is always used in combination with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. KALETRA is for adults and for children age 6 months and older.

HIV infection destroys CD4 (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

KALETRA blocks HIV protease, a chemical which is needed for HIV to multiply. KALETRA reduces the amount of HIV in your blood and increases the number of T cells. Reducing the amount of HIV in the blood reduces the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

Does KALETRA cure HIV or AIDS?
KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Does KALETRA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

KALETRA does not reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take KALETRA?

- You should stay under a doctor's care when taking KALETRA. Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- You must take KALETRA every day exactly as your doctor prescribed it. The dose of KALETRA may be different for you than for other patients. Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.
- Dosing in adults (including children 12 years of age and older): The usual dose for adults is 3 capsules (400/100 mg) or 5.0 mL of the oral solution twice a day (morning and night), in combination with other anti-HIV medicines.
- Dosing in children from 6 months to 12 years of age: Children from 6 months to 12 years of age can also take KALETRA. The child's doctor will decide the right dose based on the child's weight.
- Take KALETRA with food to help it work better.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking KALETRA without first talking with your doctor.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- Be sure to set up a schedule and follow it carefully.
- Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give KALETRA to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

What should I do if I miss a dose of KALETRA?

It is important that you do not miss any doses. If you miss a dose of KALETRA, take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

What happens if I take too much KALETRA?

If you suspect that you took more than the prescribed dose of this medicine, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

As with all prescription medicines, KALETRA should be kept out of the reach of young children. KALETRA liquid contains a large amount of alcohol. If a toddler or young child accidentally drinks more than the recommended dose of KALETRA, it could make him/her sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately if this happens.

Who should not take KALETRA?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether KALETRA is right for you.

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. These could cause serious side effects that could cause death. Before you take KALETRA, you must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or are planning to take. These include other prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal supplements.

For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please read the section titled "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir or lopinavir.

Can I take KALETRA with other medications?*

KALETRA may interact with other medicines, including those you take without a prescription. You must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or planning to take before you take KALETRA.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA:

- Do not take the following medicines with KALETRA because they can cause serious problems or death if taken with KALETRA.
  - Dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine and methylergonovine such as Cafergot®, Migranal®, D.H.E. 45®, Ergotrate Maleate, Methergine, and others
  - Halcion® (triazolam)
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  - Rythmol® (propafenone)
  - Seldane® (terfenadine)
  - Tambocor™ (flecainide)
  - Versed® (midazolam)
- Do not take KALETRA with rifampin, also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®. Rifampin may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- Do not take KALETRA with St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease KALETRA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to KALETRA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV medicines.
- Do not take KALETRA with the cholesterol-lowering medicines Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible serious reactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between KALETRA and Lipitor® (atorvastatin); talk to your doctor before you take any of these cholesterol-reducing medicines with KALETRA.

Medicines that require dosage adjustments:

It is possible that your doctor may need to increase or decrease the dose of other medicines when you are also taking KALETRA. Remember to tell your doctor all medicines you are taking or plan to take.

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with KALETRA, talk to your doctor about problems these two medicines can cause when taken together. You may get increased side effects of VIAGRA, such as low blood pressure, vision changes, and penis erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

- If you are taking oral contraceptives ("the pill") to prevent pregnancy, you should use an additional or different type of contraception since KALETRA may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.
- Efavirenz (Sustiva™) or nevirapine (Viramune®) may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood. Your doctor may increase your dose of KALETRA if you are also taking efavirenz or nevirapine.
- If you are taking Mycobutin® (rifabutin), your doctor will lower the dose of Mycobutin.
- **A change in therapy should be considered if you are taking KALETRA with:**
  Phenobarbital
  Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)
  Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)
  These medicines may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- **Other Special Considerations:**
  KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take metronidazole or disulfiram. Severe nausea and vomiting can occur.
- **If you are taking both didanosine (Videx®) and KALETRA:**
  Didanosine (Videx®) should be taken one hour before or two hours after KALETRA.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

- This list of side effects is **not** complete. If you have questions about side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You should report any new or continuing symptoms to your doctor right away. Your doctor may be able to help you manage these side effects.
- The most commonly reported side effects of moderate severity that are thought to be drug related are: abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache, and nausea. Children taking KALETRA may sometimes get a skin rash.
- Blood tests in patients taking KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Liver problems including death have occurred in patients taking KALETRA. In studies, it is unclear if KALETRA caused these liver problems because some patients had other illnesses or were taking other medicines.
- Some patients taking KALETRA can develop serious problems with their pancreas (pancreatitis), which may cause death. You have a higher chance of having pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.
- Some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.
- Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) occur in patients taking protease inhibitors such as KALETRA. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients need changes in their diabetes medicine. Others needed new diabetes medicine.
- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.
- Some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors.
- There have been other side effects in patients taking KALETRA. However, these side effects may have been due to other medicines that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Some of these side effects can be serious.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

- *If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant:* The effects of KALETRA on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known.
- *If you are breast-feeding:* Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that HIV can be transmitted through breast-feeding.
- *If you have liver problems:* If you have liver problems or are infected with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, you should tell your doctor before taking KALETRA.
- *If you have diabetes:* Some people taking protease inhibitors develop new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you have diabetes or an increase in thirst or frequent urination.
- *If you have hemophilia:* Patients taking KALETRA may have increased bleeding.

How do I store KALETRA?

- Keep KALETRA and all other medicines out of the reach of children.
- Refrigerated KALETRA capsules and oral solution remain stable until the expiration date printed on the label. If stored at room temperature up to 77°F (25°C), KALETRA capsules and oral solution should be used within 2 months.
- Avoid exposure to excessive heat.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

General advice about prescription medicines:

Talk to your doctor or other health care provider if you have any questions about this medicine or your condition. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information Leaflet. If you have any concerns about this medicine, ask your doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you information about this medicine that was written for health care professionals. Do not use this medicine for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not share this medicine with other people.

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Ref.: 03-5177-R6

Revised: January, 2002

02C-036-3240-1 **MASTER**

ABBOTT LABORATORIES
NORTH CHICAGO, IL 60064, U.S.A.

02D-036-3543-1
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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HARLEM WEEK 2002: "A NEW YORK STATE OF MIND"

Come see the best that the historic capital of Black & Hispanic America has to offer in entertainment, sports, arts & culture, information, and opportunities.

Discover Harlem during the 28th Annual HARLEM WEEK/ Harlem Jazz & Music Festival, taking place during the entire month of August.

Events include:

August 4th : A GREAT DAY IN HARLEM

- The Greater Harlem Historic Family Bike Tour
- Family Unity Day Arts & Cultural Festival
- HJ&MF / I♥NY "Concert Under The Stars"
- The National Urban "Fashion Passion Show"

Ulysses S. Grant National Memorial Park
(West 122nd St. & Riverside Drive)

August 17th : UPTOWN SATURDAY NITE

Outdoor cultural arts & entertainment festival.
Featured events include:

- The Childrens Festival (8/17 & 8/18)
  Interactive childrens entertainment
- HJ&MF's "Dancing in the Streets" Outdoor Concerts
  Dance to Jazz, Swing, R&B, Hip-Hop and World Beats
- The Flavor of New York: "Harlem *is* Fashion!"
  Fashion Show Extravaganza
  West 135th Street from Malcolm X Blvd. to St. Nicholas Ave.

August 18th : HARLEM DAY

Featured events include:

- HJ&MF concerts
- Upper Manhattan Auto Show
- National Historic Black College Fair & Expo

West 135th Street from 5th to St. Nicholas Aves.

August 28th : National Black Sports & Entertainment Hall of Fame Induction Awards Program & Gala Reception

Aaron Davis Hall (West 135th Street & Convent Avenue)

For further information on these and other events, log on to www.Harlemdiscover.com or call (212) 862-8477

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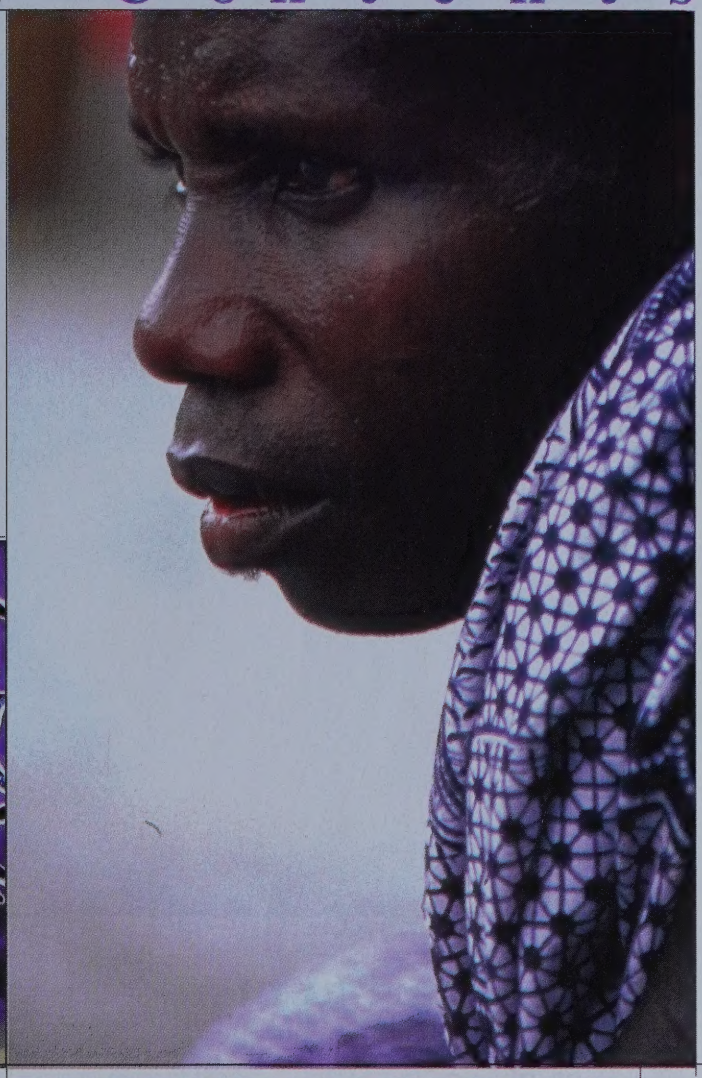

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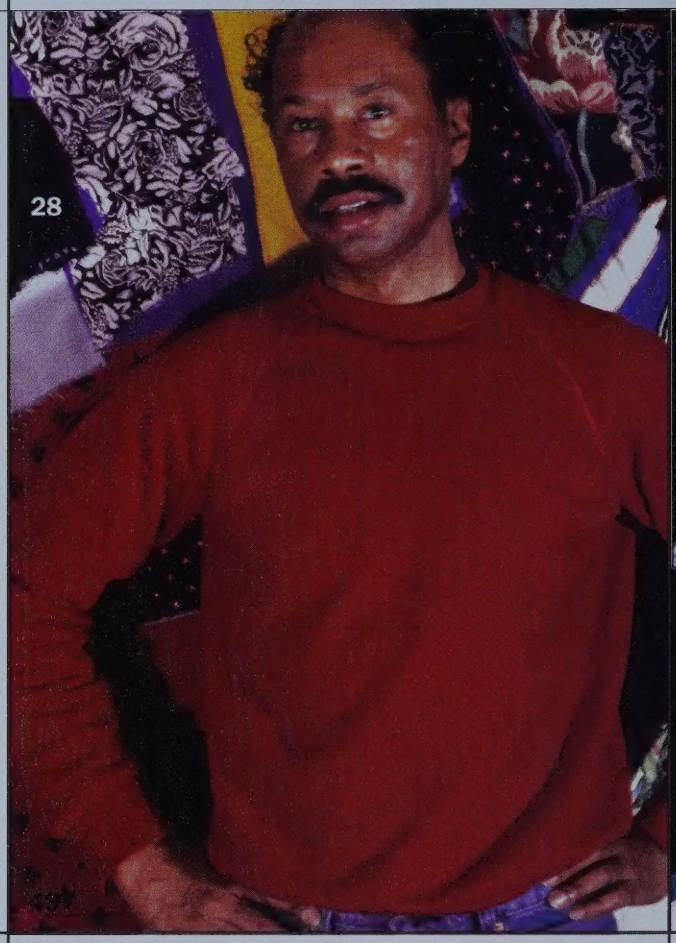

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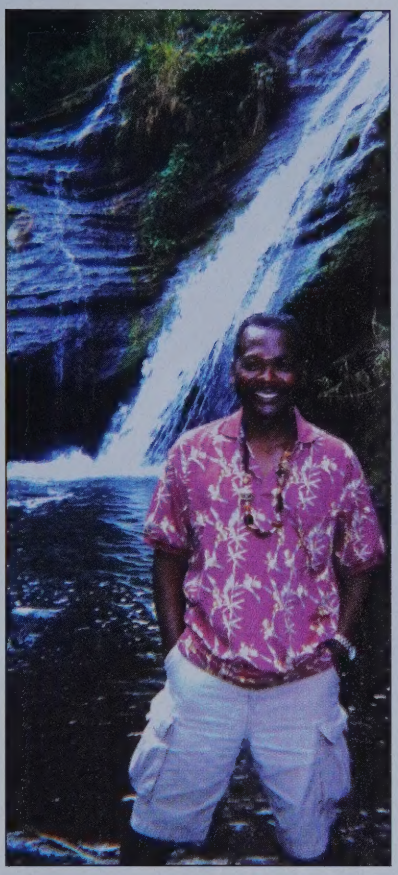
CONTRIBUTORS

D. Eric Murphy Freelance photographer D. Eric Murphy studied French at Les Foyer Des Etudes, D'International, in Paris, and law at Hamline University, en route to his work in photography. "My first job after school, Guilford College, Greensboro, N.C., was at a fine art print-making workshop called Brandywine, in Philadelphia, near my home. I painted and restored murals on the facades of buildings throughout southwest Philly. Some are still standing. After clerking in a few Chicago law firms for a "stint," Eric returned to printmaking as a photographer. He recently had his first showing in Chicago: *Body portraiture*. When he's not working on his landscape or organic and inorganic architectural images, he keeps busy working with other professional photographers as a photo assistant. "I really have been fortunate." On page 48, Eric shares his photography and travel experiences while visiting Ghana with his Mom.

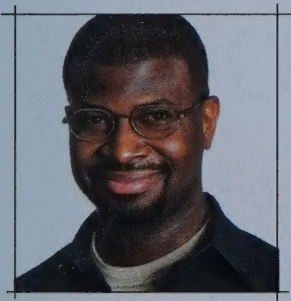


Stanley Bennett Clay took us up on an offer to visit the island of Grenada and tell all about it, pg. 80. "I love the whole place and I'm planning to go back and take friends." Clay, a three-time NAACP Theatre Award-winning producer, writer, and director also found time to talk to Author James Earl Hardy about his latest project on pg. 74.

Michael A. Adams is the self-described "prince of travel." He's on the go so much that he experiences wonderful people, fabulous places, and great new things each and every month of the year. For *Venus*, Michael explores some of the finest world-class destinations' spa here in the U.S. and abroad, in "Get Your Groove Back" on page 58. Get ready to disconnect with the stress of the daily grind and reconnect with yourself.

James McKissic has worked for the past seven years in various public education reform and youth development initiatives. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. He lives to travel, and later this summer will be hiking the Lantau Trail and taking a mini Feng Shui class in Hong Kong. Check his adventure travel tips on page 56.

Michael K. Watts Anyone who knows Michael knows that his heart beats to the tune of music. He poured his blood into his interview and story with Me'Shell Ndegeocello, on page 68. Michael is a big fan of the iconoclastic bassist. "Not only is she an amazing musician, she's really an amazing person." An Atlanta native, Michael has spent nine years as a television writer and producer, working for MTV's *Total Request Live*, talk show *Forgive or Forget*, and *Good Day Atlanta*. Michael resides in New York City.



Jena Jones

that's better.

I really need to change this photo. That "touch of gray" has sprouted over my entire crown during the past year indicating that I NEED A VACATION! No work, no cell, no e-mail ... just me, my wife, and her thong on a private boat. Yeah, I'm there. We're both overdue for our weekend stay at a spa resort and we figured you might be, too. That's why our third annual Travel Issue is so timely. We tapped gay travel guru Michael Andre Adams to introduce us to some of the world's finest spa destinations. Having personally sampled the relaxing treatments and fabulous fine dining, Michael recommends several gems for the senses. Check his story, "Get Your Groove Back" on page 59.

For those who like to live and vacation on the edge, perhaps an adventure tour would get your heart rate going. That's the only way to travel for writer James McKissic. On page 56, he has done the research for you and has prepared a list of Dos and Don'ts to help you maximize your enjoyment.

Every African American should experience the life-changing voyage back home to the Motherland. Photographer D. Eric Murphy made his first such trip this year and treats us to his remarkable images and daily journal notes as he and his mother visit and make new friends in Ghana, page 48.

Our Final Destination for this issue is the beautiful and unspoiled island of Grenada. We sent Los Angeles producer Stanley Bennett Clay to experience the rich culture and relaxing accommodations of the island known as "Spice of the Caribbean." He enjoyed himself so much that he vows to return with close friends. Don't miss his story, "Paradise Found," on page 80.

Mmm, I'm feeling better already. Now, a touch of Miss Clairol and all's right with the world again.

Charlene Cothran

VENUS

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief CHARLENE COTHRAN
Assistant to Publisher Kevin Chamberlain

EDITORIAL

Copy Editor Nikki Hopewell

Fashion Stylist Jerry Jordan Brown

Contributing Writers Michael A. Adams, Donia E. Allen, Alaric Blair, Stanley Bennett Clay, Dorinda Henry, G. B. Mann, Lucianna Lopez, D. Eric Murphy, Lesley Thomas, Detria Thompson, Malcolm Venable, Michael K. Watts, Kai Wright

Photography Cover by Amanda Marsalis
D'Ambrose Boyd, Brent Jones, Jena Jones, Lana R. Lawrence, Greg McNeil, D. Eric Murphy

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

National Advertising Director Charlene Cothran
Higher Ground Marketing Group
914/376-6161

PRODUCTION

Art Director Higher Ground Creative Group

Production Manager Garnet Wilson

CIRCULATION

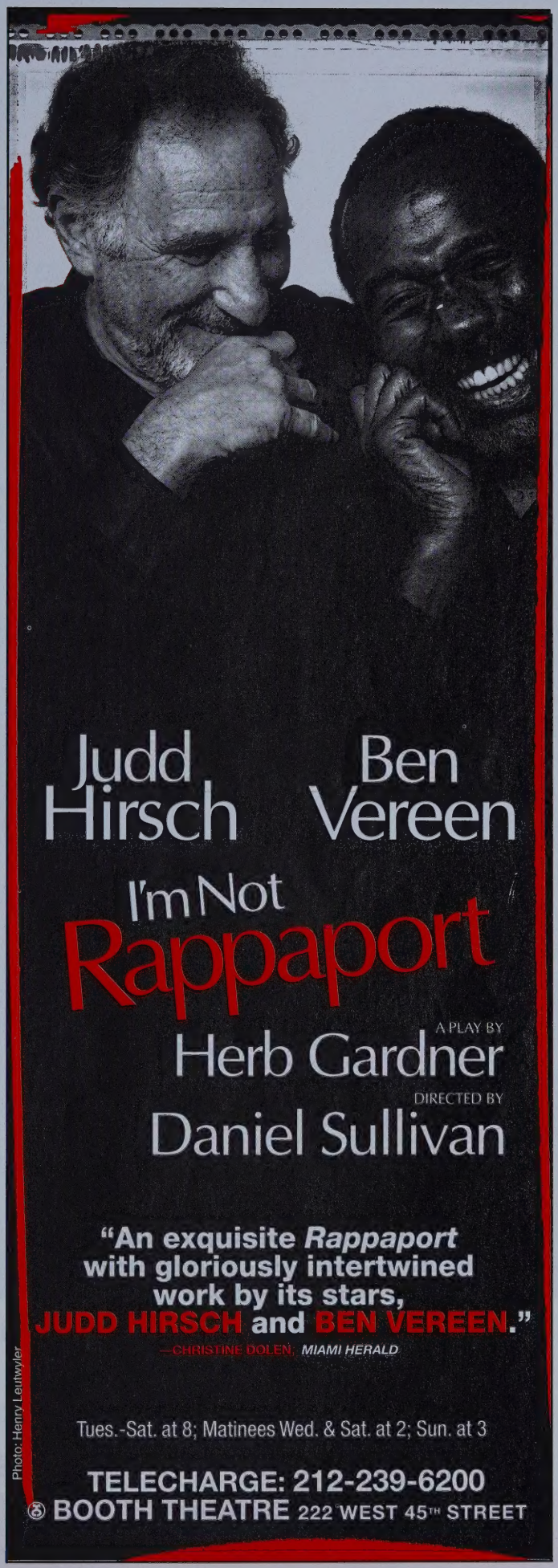
Director of Circulation Marian Farrah

New Subscribers, Address Changes, Back Issue Orders 800/642-7535 or www.venusmagazine.com

CCI

Venus is published 6 times per year by
Cothran Communications, Inc.
P. O. Box 150
Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706
914-376-6161 / Fax 914-376-4441

Printed in Canada



Imagine the freedom of a once-a-day based HIV regimen.

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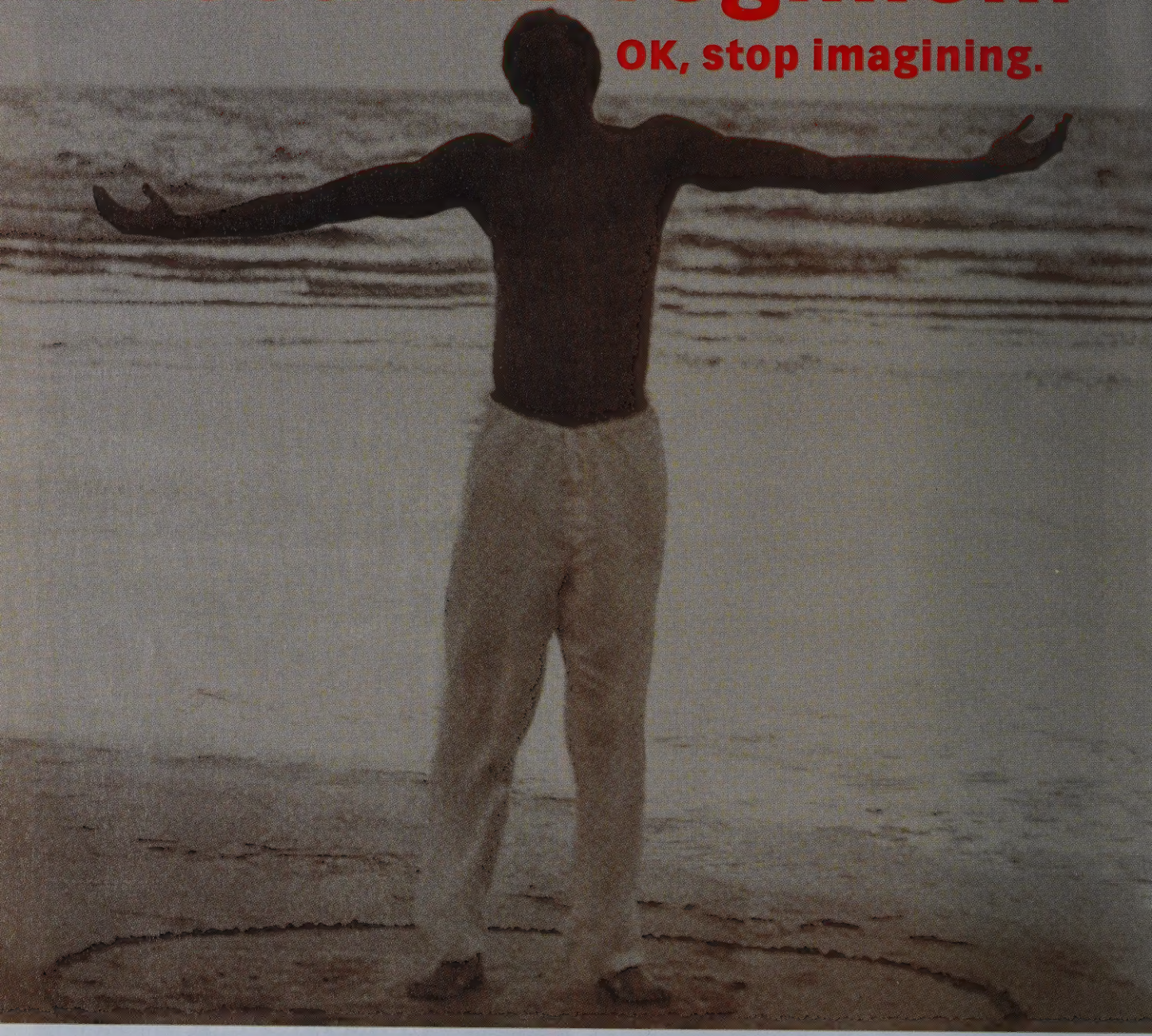

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SUSTIVA (efavirenz) in combination with other antiretroviral agents is indicated for the treatment of HIV-1 infection.

SUSTIVA does not cure HIV or prevent passing HIV to others.

Safety Information

Many patients have dizziness, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, trouble concentrating, and/or unusual dreams. These feelings tend to go away after taking the medication for a few weeks. Mild to moderate rash is another common side effect. A small number of patients have reported severe depression, strange thoughts, or angry behavior. There have been a few reports of suicide but SUSTIVA has not been established as the cause. SUSTIVA should not be taken with Hismanal® (astemizole), Propulsid® (cisapride), Versed® (midazolam), Halcion® (triazolam) or ergot derivatives. Tell your doctor about any medications or herbal products (particularly St. John's wort) that you are taking. Women should not become pregnant or breast-feed while taking SUSTIVA.

Please see important information about SUSTIVA on adjacent page.

NEW One Tablet Once Daily

SUSTIVA®

efavirenz

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www.sustiva.com

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V4-H0011 02/02

℞ ONLY

PATIENT INFORMATION

SUSTIVA®* (sus-TEE-vah)

[efavirenz (eh-FAH-vih-rehnz)] capsules and tablets

ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with SUSTIVA.

Please also read the section **"MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH SUSTIVA."**

Read this information before you start taking SUSTIVA. Read it again each time you refill your prescription, in case there is any new information. This leaflet provides a summary about SUSTIVA and does not include everything there is to know about your medicine. This information is not meant to take the place of talking with your doctor.

What is SUSTIVA?

SUSTIVA is a medicine used in combination with other medicines to help treat infection with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). SUSTIVA is a type of anti-HIV drug called a "non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor" (NNRTI).

SUSTIVA works by lowering the amount of HIV in the blood (viral load). SUSTIVA must be taken with other anti-HIV medicines. When taken with other anti-HIV medicines, SUSTIVA has been shown to reduce viral load and increase the number of CD4 cells, a type of immune cell in blood. SUSTIVA may not have these effects in every patient.

SUSTIVA does not cure HIV or AIDS. People taking SUSTIVA may still develop other infections and complications. Therefore, it is very important that you stay under the care of your doctor.

SUSTIVA has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others. Therefore, continue to practice safe sex, and do not use or share dirty needles.

What are the possible side effects of SUSTIVA?

Serious psychiatric problems. A small number of patients experience severe depression, strange thoughts, or angry behavior while taking SUSTIVA. Some patients have thoughts of suicide and a few have actually committed suicide. These problems tend to occur more often in patients who have had mental illness. Contact your doctor right away if you think you are having these psychiatric symptoms, so your doctor can decide if you should continue to take SUSTIVA.

Common side effects. Many patients have dizziness, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, trouble concentrating, and/or unusual dreams during treatment with SUSTIVA. These side effects may be reduced if you take SUSTIVA at bedtime on an empty stomach. They also tend to go away after you have taken the medicine for a few weeks. If you have these common side effects, such as dizziness, it does not mean that you will also have serious psychiatric problems, such as severe depression, strange thoughts, or angry behavior. Tell your doctor right away if any of these side effects continue or if they bother you. It is possible that these symptoms may be more severe if SUSTIVA is used with alcohol or mood altering (street) drugs.

If you are dizzy, have trouble concentrating, or are drowsy, avoid activities that may be dangerous, such as driving or operating machinery.

Rash is common. Rashes usually go away without any change in treatment. In a small number of patients, rash may be serious. If you develop a rash, call your doctor right away. **Rash may be a serious problem in some children.** Tell your child's doctor right away if you notice rash or any other side effects while your child is taking SUSTIVA.

Other common side effects include tiredness, upset stomach, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Changes in body fat. Changes in body fat develop in some patients taking anti-HIV medicine. These changes may include an increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), in the breasts, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these fat changes are not known.

Tell your doctor or healthcare provider if you notice any side effects while taking SUSTIVA.

Contact your doctor before stopping SUSTIVA because of side effects or for any other reason.

This is not a complete list of side effects possible with SUSTIVA. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for a more complete list of side effects of SUSTIVA and all the medicines you will take.

How should I take SUSTIVA (efavirenz)?

General Information

- You should take SUSTIVA on an empty stomach, preferably at bedtime.
- Swallow SUSTIVA with water.
- Taking SUSTIVA with food increases the amount of medicine in your body, which may increase the frequency of side effects.
- Taking SUSTIVA at bedtime may make some side effects less bothersome.
- SUSTIVA must be taken in combination with other anti-HIV medicines. If you take only SUSTIVA, the medicine may stop working.
- Do not miss a dose of SUSTIVA. If you forget to take SUSTIVA, take the missed dose right away, unless it is almost time for your next dose. Do not double the next dose. Carry on with your regular dosing schedule. If you need help in planning the best times to take your medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- Take the exact amount of SUSTIVA your doctor prescribes. Never change the dose on your own. Do not stop this medicine unless your doctor tells you to stop.
- If you believe you took more than the prescribed amount of SUSTIVA, contact your local Poison Control Center or emergency room right away.
- Tell your doctor if you start any new medicine or change how you take old ones. Your doses may need adjustment.
- When your SUSTIVA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to SUSTIVA and become harder to treat.
- Your doctor may want to do blood tests to check for certain side effects while you take SUSTIVA.

Capsules

- The dose of SUSTIVA capsules for adults is 600 mg (three 200 mg capsules, taken together) once a day by mouth. The dose of SUSTIVA for children may be lower (see **Can children take SUSTIVA?**).

Tablets

- The dose of SUSTIVA tablets for adults is 600 mg (one tablet) once a day by mouth.

Can children take SUSTIVA?

Yes, children who are able to swallow capsules can take SUSTIVA. Rash may be a serious problem in some children. Tell your child's doctor right away if you notice rash or any other side effects while your child is taking SUSTIVA. The dose of SUSTIVA for children may be lower than the dose for adults. Capsules containing lower doses of SUSTIVA are available. Your child's doctor will determine the right dose based on your child's weight.

Who should not take SUSTIVA?

Do not take SUSTIVA if you are allergic to the active ingredient, efavirenz, or to any of the inactive ingredients. Your doctor and pharmacist have a list of the inactive ingredients.

What should I avoid while taking SUSTIVA?

- **Women taking SUSTIVA should not become pregnant.** Serious birth defects have been seen in animals treated with SUSTIVA. It is not known whether this could happen in humans. **Tell your doctor right away if you are pregnant.** Also talk with your doctor if you want to become pregnant.
- Women should not rely only on hormone-based birth control, such as pills, injections, or implants, because SUSTIVA may make these contraceptives ineffective. Women must use a reliable form of barrier contraception, such as a condom or diaphragm, even if they also use other methods of birth control.
- **Do not breast-feed if you are taking SUSTIVA.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that mothers with HIV not breast-feed because they can pass the HIV through their milk to the baby. Also, SUSTIVA may pass through breast milk and cause serious harm to the baby. Talk with your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You may need to stop breast-feeding or use a different medicine.
- Taking SUSTIVA with alcohol or other medicines causing similar side effects as SUSTIVA, such as drowsiness, may increase those side effects.
- Do not take any other medicines without checking with your doctor. These medicines include prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal products, especially St. John's wort.

Before using SUSTIVA, tell your doctor if you

- **have problems with your liver, or have hepatitis.** Your doctor may want to do tests to check your liver while you take SUSTIVA.
- **have ever had mental illness or are using drugs or alcohol.**

What important information should I know about taking other medicines with SUSTIVA (efavirenz)?

SUSTIVA may change the effect of other medicines, including ones for HIV, and cause serious side effects. Your doctor may change your other medicines or change their doses. Other medicines, including herbal products, may affect SUSTIVA. For this reason, **it is very important to:**

- Let all your doctors and pharmacists know that you take SUSTIVA.
- Tell your doctors and pharmacists about all medicines you take. This includes those you buy over-the-counter and herbal or natural remedies.

Bring all your prescription and non-prescription medicines as well as any herbal remedies that you are taking when you see a doctor, or make a list of their names, how much you take, and how often you take them. This will give your doctor a complete picture of the medicines you use. Then he or she can decide the best approach for your situation.

Taking SUSTIVA with St. John's wort *(hypericum perforatum)*, an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort is not recommended. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or are planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease SUSTIVA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to SUSTIVA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV drugs.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH SUSTIVA

The following medicines may cause serious and life-threatening side effects when taken with SUSTIVA. You should not take any of these medicines while taking SUSTIVA**:

- Hismanal® (astemizole)
- Propulsid® (cisapride)
- Versed® (midazolam)
- Halcion® (triazolam)
- Ergot medications (for example, Wigraine® and Cafergot®)

The following medicines may need to be replaced with another medicine when taken with SUSTIVA**:

- Fortovase®, Invirase® (saquinavir)
- Biaxin® (clarithromycin)

The following medicines may need to have their dose changed when taken with SUSTIVA**:

- Crixivan® (indinavir)
- Mycobutin® (rifabutin)
- Methadone

These are not all the medicines that may cause problems if you take SUSTIVA. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medicines that you take.

General advice about SUSTIVA:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use SUSTIVA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give SUSTIVA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

Keep SUSTIVA at room temperature (77°F) in the bottle given to you by your pharmacist. The temperature can range from 59° to 86°F.

Keep SUSTIVA out of the reach of children.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about SUSTIVA. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your pharmacist or doctor for the full prescribing information about SUSTIVA, or you can visit the SUSTIVA website at http://www.sustiva.com or call 1-800-426-7644.

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Distributed by:

BMS Virology™
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Princeton, NJ 08543
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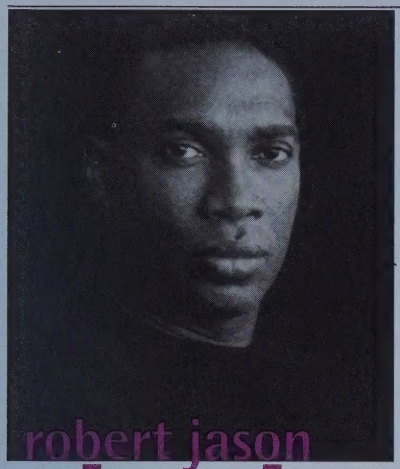
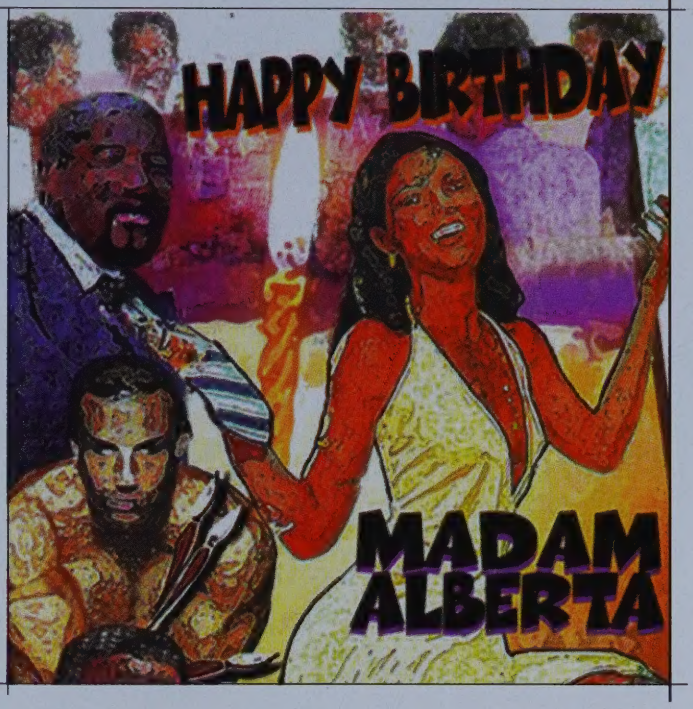
T4-B001B-2-02

6495-06
Revised February 2002



robert jason jackson

words by Malcom Venable



"I should have been a psychiatrist because people tell me their deepest darkest secrets."

People often liken Robert Jason Jackson's rich baritone voice to that of Paul Robeson. Indeed, this 40-plus Brooklynite's larynx has the kind of low sonorous pitch that made some '70s R&B stars legends. But Jackson shares much more in common with the model Renaissance man. He's an accomplished singer and actor with credits on the stage and screen, and now this prolific writer is all set to debut his latest play, *Happy Birthday, Madam Alberta*, as part of the cultural celebration of this year's Black Pride festivities in New York.

Jackson's deep voice is truly unforgettable. (Jackson says his voice went from adolescent to crooner overnight during puberty and never cracked, opening the door to adult roles at a young age.) Astute listeners may remember it from the VH1 biography on Sean Combs, as well as commercials for 1-800-CallCollect and the American Bible Society's *Bible on Tape*. His was the voice of Jesus. "I grew up in the Pentecostal Church, so to be playing Jesus was a special thing for me. I don't go for easy parts." A jazz singer, Jackson has lent vocals to a number of projects including *Conjure* and *Dancing with Cab Calloway*, both on Sting's label with Olu Dara, Taj Mahal, and others.

Being the Renaissance man that he is though, Jackson is more than just a voice. His extensive film credits include *Malcolm X*, in which Jackson was a member of the Nation of Islam, and *New Jersey Drive*, in which he played a stepfather of a troubled teenager. On the small screen, he's appeared in such shows as *New York Undercover, Law and Order: SVU* and *Guiding Light*. Jackson is also a friend to the stage, having appeared in notable works including *Betsy Brown* with Ntozake Shange and *Raisin* with Claudia MacNeil.

Now Jackson is pouring himself into his own play, *Happy Birthday, Madam Alberta*, his third. He was commissioned to write a play by producers of the Pride festival. Given only the specifications of theme ("Generations"), Jackson went to the lab and produced *Happy* in a month. The one-hour, one-act drama follows Madam Alberta, a drag queen whose name and panache are inspired by the poems of Langston Hughes. It's her birthday, and her diverse group of friends (a lesbian couple, a senior citizen, her drag husband, and the young mentor who has become like a son to the couple) have come to wish her well. During the course of the evening though, a game of Truth or Dare yields some very private and volatile secrets. Jackson describes it as "very funny and very intense" and says the characters and the unbelievable things they reveal are, in some ways, drawn from his own life experiences.

"Certain things you always draw on when you're writing, from your own life. I'm a man of the world. I listen to people. As an actor I watch people," he says. He also has an uncanny magnetism that comes across in the work. "People always tell me things. I always say I should have been a psychiatrist because people tell me their deepest darkest secrets. Many of the things that the characters say are things that people have told to me."

All the more reason to check out his play if you happen to know Jackson—come see your dirty laundry aired during Pride. But Jackson assures your business is safe with him. "They're veiled secrets. No one would want to kill me or sue me."

we've got to sing our song!

a new event is changing the face of broadway

words by Michael K. Watts
images by D'Ambrose Boyd

black 2 broadway

"We've gotten the industry involved—casting agents, personal managers, and booking agents have a presence at each event."

As faces of color continue to fade from Broadway theater, one event is bringing some much-needed color back to the stage. *Black 2: Broadway* is emerging as the premier event for showcasing the talents of theater performers of color in New York City. It's an upscale musical extravaganza that is attacking the severe lack of stage opportunities and giving performers of color a reason to sing again. Finally, performers who may be between gigs have a stage to keep their skills up, and working performers get a chance to stretch their own talents beyond their routine gigs.

The talent pool for *Black 2: Broadway* includes some of the finest actors, singers, and musicians in the theater and entertainment industries. While performers are basking in their moment in the spotlight, audiences are getting a show they will not find anywhere else.

Top left, co-producer Kevin-Anthony opens the show with a soulful Marvin Gaye tune. Co-producer Sean Hollingsworth welcomes guests to a fabulous evening of entertainment. R&B siren Alyson Williams, above, stays true to her jazz roots. Below, the Broadway Inspirational Voices, with choir member & actress Phylicia Rashad, turn Monday night into Sunday morning.

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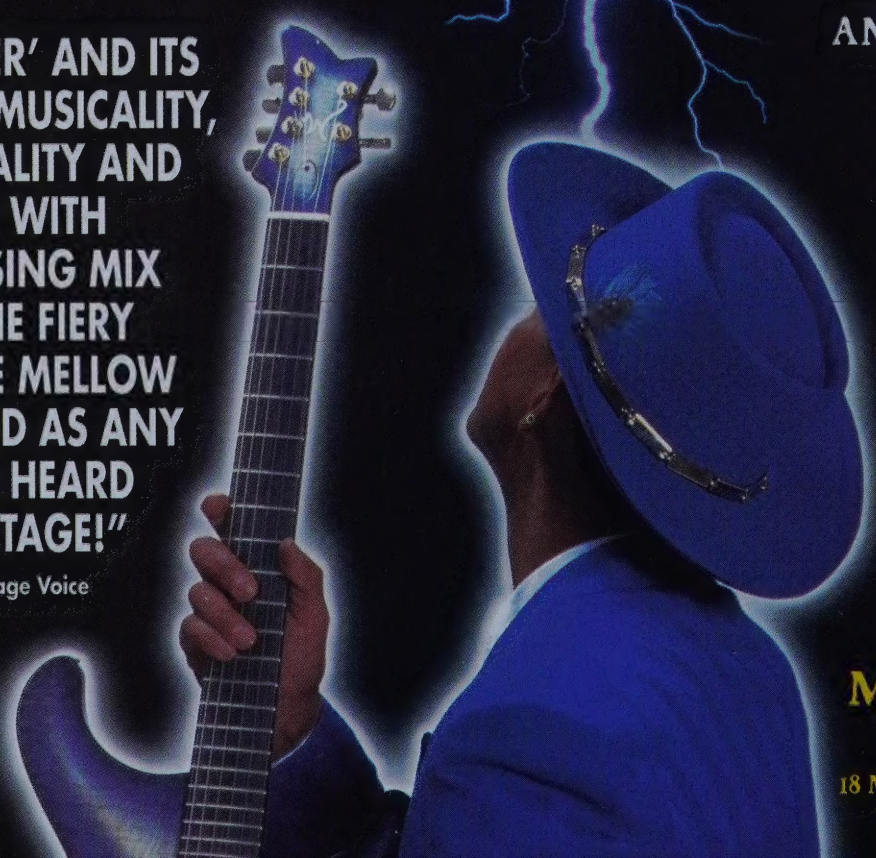
– The Village Voice



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Just imagine: Melba Moore reprising her Tony Award-winning role as Ludie Bell from the Broadway musical *Purlie*; actress Phylicia Rashad joining the choir with the Broadway Inspirational Voices; Broadway and R&B siren Alyson Williams scatting to the tunes of Stevie Wonder and Nancy Wilson; Napiera Groves of *As the World Turns* trying out her skills as a vocalist; and Broadway favorites Lillias White, Darius De Haas, Marva Hicks, and B. J. Crosby bringing the house down. The list goes on.

"Each of these artists has audiences that want to see them. They're just lacking the venues to present themselves," said event co-producer Sean Hollingsworth of B2: Productions. *Black 2: Broadway* is the inaugural event for B2: Productions, whose mission is to create a national network of venues to support performers, producers, composers, and writers of color. "We're committed to generating opportunities for artists of color," said Hollingsworth.

Nationally known performers, emerging talent, and unknown artists grace the *Black 2: Broadway* stage for the two-hour show once a month (always on Monday nights when most theater stages are dark). Performers sing from an ever-changing repertoire of familiar songs and show tunes. After the show, the event becomes a networking party where the night's performers peddle their latest works and get leads on future gigs.

"We've gotten the industry involved—casting agents, personal managers, and booking agents have a presence at each event," said event co-producer Kevin-Anthony. "We have a picture and résumé drop-off program where performers who come to see the show can bring their headshots and résumés. We collect and present the pictures and résumés to the industry professionals, who commit to calling in at least one performer for an audition or interview."

Hollingsworth said one major inspiration for the event is the staggering statistics of theater actors of color. A 2001 census conducted by the Actor's Equity Association (AEA) found that of its approximately 44,000 U.S. actors, only about 8 percent were of color. The AEA also said that of all actors working on a production contract (which includes Broadway and national touring productions), actors of color make up only 20 percent, on average. *Black 2: Broadway* aims to change the grim outlook for performers of color and let them know that they are not alone. "Since March, we have had approximately 45 people who have been given the opportunity to audition or meet with various agencies," beamed Kevin-Anthony. He had a successful nine-year run of consistent work as an actor, which mysteriously came to a standstill in 1999. For him and Hollingsworth, this event is about encouraging performers while encouraging themselves.

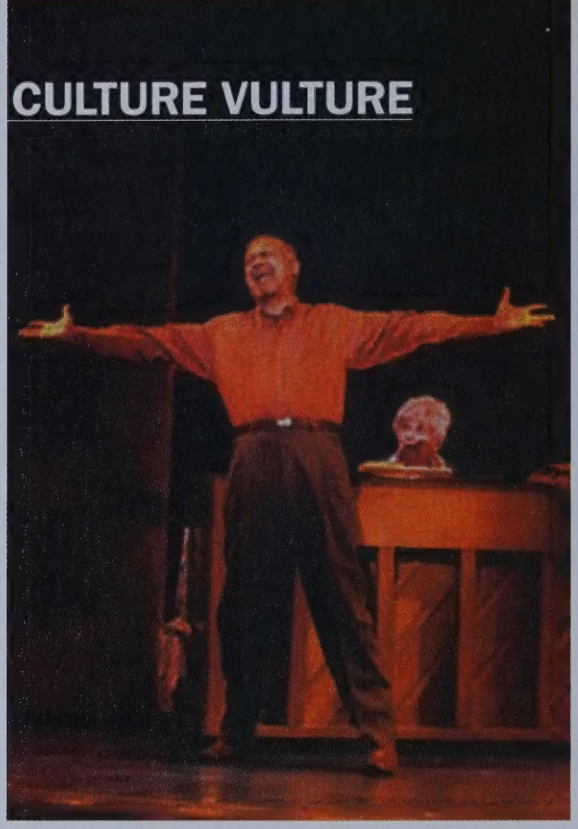
Recording artist Marva Hicks reminds the audience what real entertaiment talent is all about with her performance.

"We encourage shameless networking," Kevin-Anthony said. "We want them to reconnect with one another and make new connections. We want people to walk in with their heads held high and walk out with their heads held higher."

In keeping with the event's mission, all performers (even the stage managers) receive a modest, yet respectful, honorarium. Still, Kevin-Anthony said they are feverishly seeking some type of corporate sponsorship.

"We're doing this from our own pockets," he admitted. In the future, *Black 2: Broadway* will expand to five major cities, including Detroit, Atlanta, and Chicago. But, Los Angeles is waiting in the wings as the next city to launch the event.

Black 2: Broadway takes place the third Monday of each month at B. B. King's Blues Club & Grill, 243 West 42nd St. in New York. Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets are $25 in advance and $30 at the door—available at all Ticketmaster outlets. For more information, visit www.b2productions.org.



the full monty revisited

words by Malcom Venable

Tonight Larry Marshall is going to be on stage naked. Only for a brief moment, mind you, but naked nonetheless. He fears not; nothing new. Not only has this accomplished singer and actor already wiggled his willie on stage about 300 times as Horse in the Broadway musical *The Full Monty*, he was one of the original members of 1969's notorious *Hair*, when he was 26 and didn't have to "warm up to get out of bed." As he and his gray Lhasa Apso Tsing unwind before the show in his dressing room stocked with candles, Echinacea, books, and cherished photos, he talks about the notoriety nudity causes, being a man of color on the Great White Way and unconditional love of his gay son.

> "My agent sent me a card saying, 'After 30 years, they're still buying you in the nude.'"

The nudity in Hair, said 58-year-old Marshall, who's own hair is silver, "was blown out of proportion. It was just one scene." A scene he said lasted about a minute and a half. Despite the controversy the play caused, he describes the experience almost blissfully. "I just got upset with myself that I was afraid of doing [the nudity]. One day I just said, 'I'm going to do it.' It was the greatest feeling in the world—this release, this freedom." He almost did another nude scene in Bernstein's *The Mass* in 1971, but by then onstage nudity had become cliché and the plan was scrapped.

Perhaps representing a proverbial swinging of the pendulum, here's Larry's Harry once again on Broadway. He plays Noah Simmons, the last man added to an already

Larry Marshall, I, performs a musical number with the cast of The Full Monty.

formed band of amateur exotic dancers. He woos them on an audition with his jazzy footwork and hip repartee, and goes into a number "Big Black Man," a raucous, campy show tune about the reputed libido of the Black man. In this show, little Marshall is only out for a split second.

Marshall, who jokes that he's 32 years older and 50 pounds heavier than the flower child he once portrayed, says he initially panicked thinking, "Who wants to see an old man in the nude?" But a fabulous frame of mind keeps this jovial dramatist carefree. "It's done in such great fun, it outweighs any kind of reluctance you might have." (Indeed, one more nude review and he may be known as The Full Monty: "My agent sent me a card saying, 'After 30 years, they're still buying you in the nude.'")

But Marshall is much more than a darling of the burlesque. His life training began with young Larry relocating from South Carolina to live with a maternal aunt in Harlem, N.Y. He began singing in Catholic church. He then took up bebop as a mod teen and formed a few bands, one of which opened for a 17-year-old Stevie Wonder at the Apollo. He left his first year of Fordham University for Xavier, a Black school in New Orleans where he began formal opera training. After leaving Xavier for the New England Conservatory of Music, Marshall said he sort of "fell" into theater with a production of *Porgy and Bess* (he was nominated for Tony and Drama Desk awards for a 1976 production of the same show) and went on to star in Broadway hits *Rockabye Hamlet, Big Deal,* and Sting's *3 Penny Opera.* He also played Cab Calloway in *The Cotton Club,* Simon Zealotes in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and has been on Showtime's *Soul Food.*

But with two decades of Broadway under his belt, sometimes the challenges color can create makes getting on stage and "showing what you working with," mere peanuts. When Marshall went to Detroit for a performance of *A Clear Day,* race riots broke out. He counted 15 fires from a rooftop and remembered being at a party where "Everybody kept asking me, 'What is it that you people want?'" Prejudices aside, most of the bias Marshall said he experiences stems from his actual color, not his race. He was excluded from a Washington production of *Hair* because, "they felt I wasn't Black enough visually to bring off what they wanted to happen. I've run up against that a lot. Sixty percent of things I came close to and didn't get were because of my color, because I'm so fair." He jokes that when singing "Big Black Man" in *The Full Monty* he once thought, 'I sure hope they get it.'"

But Marshall's smile is generous; he's a youthful and easygoing chap who says, "I have discovered that the secret to not looking your age is immaturity." It's no surprise then when he speaks casually about his gay son. "I just love him," he says of 41-year-old David, who lives in Amsterdam. "That's what his choice is and I respect that." David has a partner and Marshall says, "I'm happy for him. If you can find happiness nowadays that's what it's about." And this "gay dad" is happy, tending to his technique, tending to Tsing, and throwing away trepidation, ready to fling it all off yet again. Life, as Marshall exemplifies, is too short not to go the full monty.

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Amy Culver-Aversa
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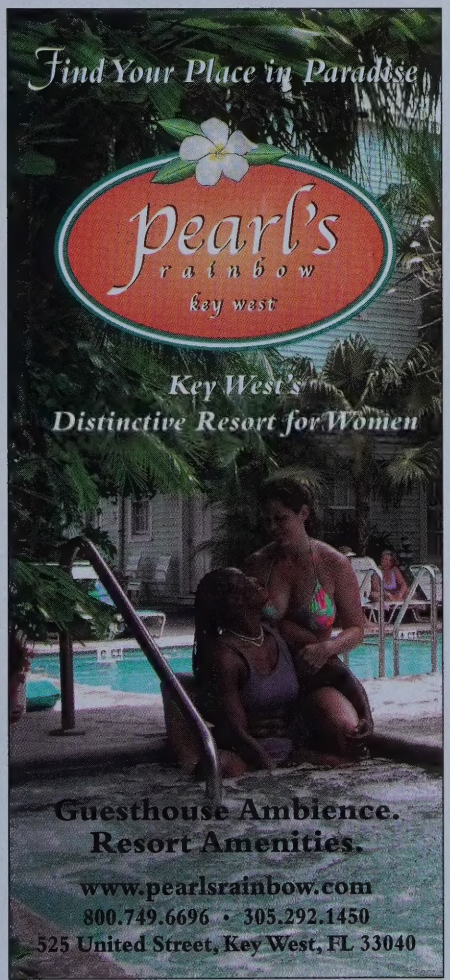
Getting There:

Mangoes is located at 700 Duval St. in the heart of old town Key West, Fla. Private rooms and catering available. Lunch: 11-4:30 p.m., Afternoon menu: 4:30 - 6 p.m., Dinner: 6 - 11 p.m., and their signature wood-oven pizzas and late-night menu from 11 - 1 a.m. 305/292-4606; www.mangoes.com

After an exceptional afternoon on the beach in Key West, Fla., enjoy an extraordinary meal at Mangoes Restaurant. What you see is what you get: open-air dining at its best. "The opportunity to own a restaurant like Mangoes is a great experience," said owner Amy Culver-Aversa. "Between the location, my staff, and our guests, work truly is a pleasure. To be able to do something you enjoy and be surrounded by a talented staff that share your passion makes it a fun environment, and I think our repeat clientele is a testament to this fact."

Prepare your taste buds for a mind-blowing feast. Executive Chef Paul Orchard describes his menu as "an eclectic blend of evolving world cuisines, new and old, with a creative flair and an emphasis on freshness." His Passion Yellowtail Snapper, above, is a must. An ample portion of fresh local yellowtail snapper is lightly sautéed and served with a passion fruit beurre blanc, toasted coconut, and mango garnish. Mmmm, heaven.



This summer, modern and light Italian dishes pair perfectly with crisp lively Ecco Domani Wines. The Italian term "fresco," meaning fresh, best describes the way to start a tasty meal. "The abundance of fresh, high-quality ingredients and the trend toward better living have contributed to today's light and savory Italian cuisine, which marries well with Ecco Domani wines," said Chef-Proprietor Francesco Antonucci of the chic restaurant Remi in New York City.

Sea Scallops with Bean Cream & Ecco Domani Wine

1 cup dried borlotti (cranberry) beans or pinto beans
1 small carrot, peeled
1 small onion, peeled
1/2 stalk celery
2 cloves garlic, peeled
Small sprigs fresh rosemary, thyme, flat-leaf (Italian) parsley tied together
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
10 large sea scallops
3 tablespoons dry bread crumbs
1 1/2 tablespoons finely minced flat-leaf (Italian) parsley
1/2 teaspoon finely minced fresh thyme
Sprigs of fresh thyme for garnish

Cover beans with water to a depth of 1 inch and allow to soak for four hours or over night. Drain the beans, place them in a saucepan, and cover with water to a depth of 1 inch. Add the carrot, onion, celery, garlic, and bunch of herbs. Bring to simmer and cook, partly covered, until beans are tender, about 45 minutes to 1 hour. In the beginning of the cooking, you may have to skim foam that collects on the surface. When the beans are tender, drain them, reserving 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid.

Purée all but 1 cup of the beans in a food processor with the cooked garlic, carrot, onion, and reserved cooking liquid. Add 2 tablespoons of the olive and season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a saucepan and set aside. Slice the sea scallops in half horizontally. Mix the breadcrumbs with the cheese, parsley, and thyme and season with salt and pepper. Dust the sea scallops with the breadcrumb mixture. Heat the remaining oil in a heavy skillet. Lightly brown the slices of sea scallops in the oil, then transfer them to absorbent paper. Toss the reserved cup of beans in the skillet just enough to reheat them. Reheat the bean sauce.

To serve, spoon 5 to 6 tablespoons of the bean sauce on each of four warm plates. Arrange five slices of the scallops, slightly overlapping, in a circle on the sauce. Spoon a few tablespoons of the whole beans in the center, garnish with sprigs of thyme, and serve. Makes four servings.

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"What turned on the light for me as an artist was seeing Van Gogh's sunflowers. That burst of color and those flowers, that locked me in to forever wanting to be an artist."

an afternoon with michael cummings

words by Donia Elizabeth Allen
images by Siede Preis Photography

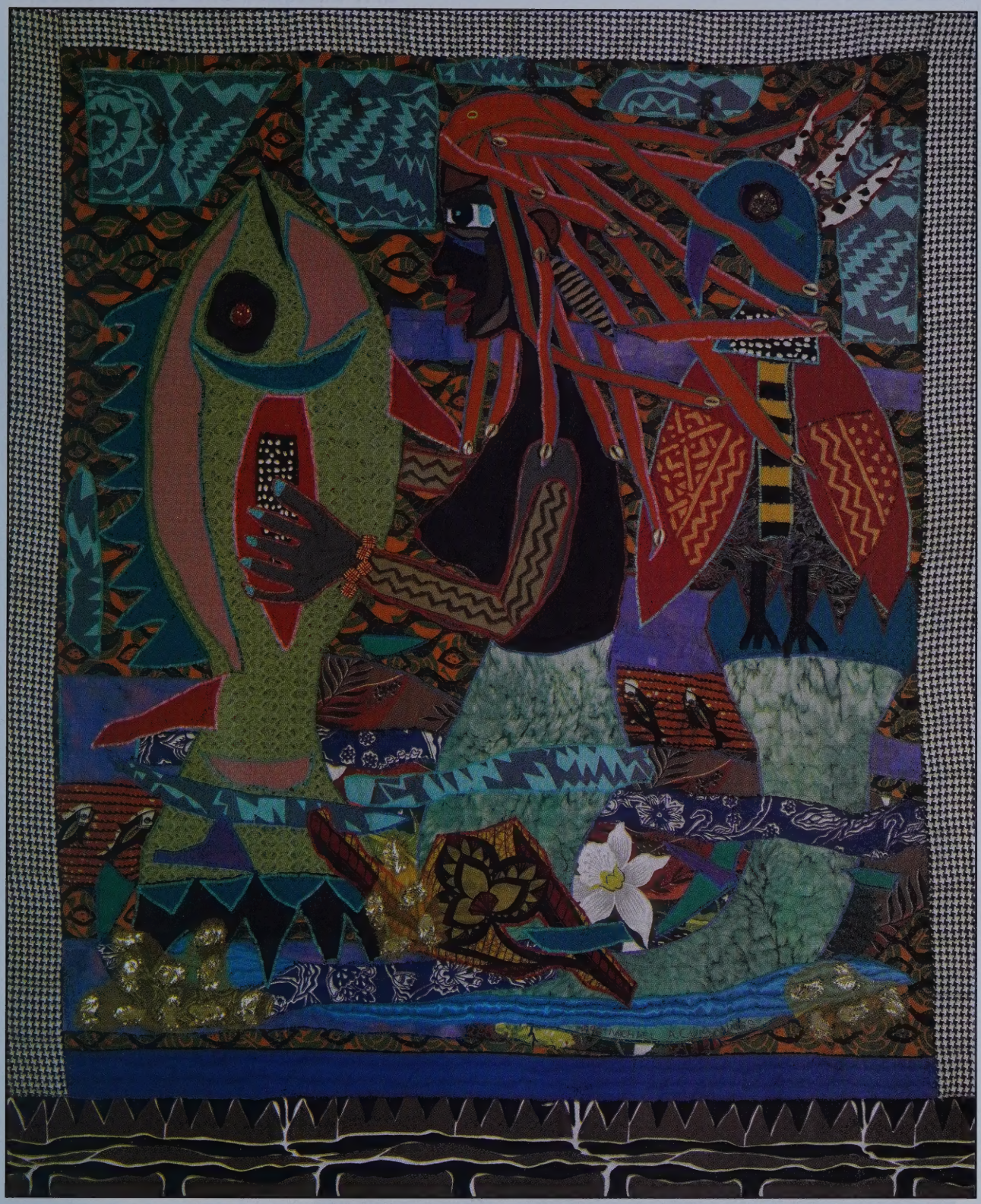
Michael Cummings and I met in the 100-year-old brownstone he purchased in the early 1980s on a cold, rainy afternoon. His home offered a stark contrast to the inhospitable weather outside: jazz plays on the stereo, Cummings' lush, colorful quilts cover the walls, and African sculptures, which he described as "comforting and stimulating and remarkable to look at" sat on the floor and on end tables. In addition to his own work, Cummings had a marvelous collection of magazine covers. From *Vibe* to *Rolling Stone* to *Black Enterprise*, Cummings' framed covers of African-American icons, Prince and Muhammad Ali among them, grace the walls. As we toured his home, he discussed his work and influences. It became clear to me that Cummings is not only an artist but also a collector, a cultural keeper of all things African American. His home reflected this: It was a shrine to African Diaspora art.

When I asked Cummings if there was an "aha" moment, namely a moment when he knew he wanted to be an artist more than anything, his response was quick. "What turned on the light for me as an artist was seeing Van Gogh's sunflowers. That burst of color and those flowers, that locked me in to forever wanting to be an artist."

Though he remembered that moment clearly, he described his path to becoming a quilter as "a winding maze. I went to college [for] what my parents wanted me to go into—business administration." He laughs. "After two years of it, I looked around at my peers in the program and thought, 'I don't want to do this.'" When he told his stepfather he wanted to become an artist, his stepfather asked if he really wanted to live in an apartment with no heat and no money to buy food. Naively, Cummings responded, "Yes."

After that conversation, Cummings made his move. "I switched to all art classes, got a part-time job, and I moved out, got a motorcycle and became a bohemian, weekend artist." He remembers partying a lot back then, but also taking time to study art. "It was party, party, party, and all of that, but I did nurture myself by going to museums, and there was always this sort of inner voice calling me to go look, go see, go experience, go feel, so even though I wasn't doing a lot in terms of training and technique, mentally and emotionally I was feeling it."

Interestingly, Cummings, a Los Angeles native, was the last of his friends to move to New York. "Friends of mine were moving to New York to seek their fortune. I was the last to leave. We ended up in a tiny apartment



"Haitian Boat People #2," 2001
size 4 feet by 4 feet

in the city, all of us on the floor, with a dog. I had no relatives in New York so there was no corner where anyone might know me like in L.A. The city never slept, and being 25 in New York City in 1970, it was like nothing could go wrong."

Ironically, Cummings found that his two years of business administration came in handy. "I was lucky enough to get nonprofit art jobs so I was always around people talking about art." Cummings considers having a day job critical to his being an artist. "It's been a balancing act, but mentally and physically it's been very helpful. I didn't want to be without an income and health insurance. I had to be practical. I'd met many artists in New York City who were barely making it, and I didn't want to go down that road."

"African Jazz #10," 1990
size 6 feet by 8 feet

For one of his jobs, Cummings had to create chalk outlines for banners that would later be filled in with paint. Cummings said this informed his quilting. "I visualize everything then go to a fabric with chalk and do an outline and start cutting." Of the many things that drew Cummings to working with fabric, some were purely practical. "Paper was hard to work with and store. Fabric was soft, and you could fold it and put it under the bed." Cummings' quilts are designed to be used as such. "All of my quilts are designed as traditional quilts, so you can throw one on the bed if you want. The only difference is I do a sleeve that you can put a rod through and hang it on the wall if you want."

The quilts are, in a word, gorgeous. They feature bursts of color and texture, buttons, beads, birds, spirits, dresses bought at flea markets around the city, dogs, cats, blue-locked Haitian mermaids, jazzmen, butterflies, and crowns. The characters in the quilts appear alive and beg to be touched, and when I did, I half expected them to touch back, for one of the Haitian mermaids to reach out a jeweled hand or one of the jazz men to wave. Little wonder that his work is in the permanent collections of Bill and Camille Cosby and has been commissioned by the House of

Seagram for Absolut Vodka and HBO, among others.

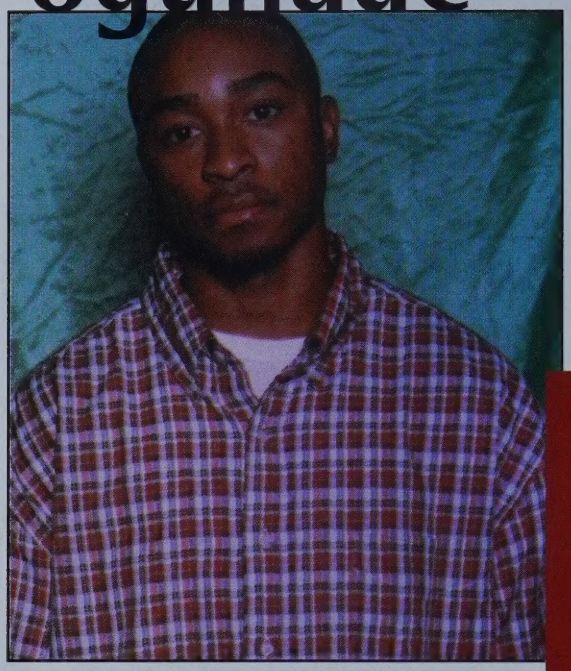
When I asked Cummings about influences, he told me they were many and varied. His Josephine Baker quilt was inspired in part by reading about her. The series of quilts entitled "Take My Brother Home" was inspired by a performance of that song by the MoreHouse Glee Club. And the Egungun series was inspired in part by a course he took on Yoruba culture at the Caribbean Cultural Center. Certainly teachers played a role. "Just before I left L.A., I had joined this organization of Black artists. They were mainly teachers and older than I was, but they had books and they had conversation and ideas about what took place historically, and that opened my eyes to the possibilities."

Other visual artists impacted him significantly as well, among them Romare Bearden, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jacob Lawrence. Cummings also cites the music of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and later the Motown sound, Joni Mitchell, and Bob Dylan. He is particularly moved by vocals: "The words were just so magical. They opened up images in my mind."

And of course, New York City itself was a tremendous influence. "It wasn't until I came to New York that I found there was a depository of a vast amount of printed materials on what we had done and achieved and identifying who we were with photographs and stuff. This museum opened in my head at that time that was endless, and it's still going on, the discoveries." For all of our sake, may the discoveries never cease for this brilliant, generous artist.

" Take My Brother Home #2," 1993
size 5 feet by 7 feet

babijide ogunade



When young Babijide Ogunade of Lagos State, Nigeria, began showing interest in art, his father and grandmother encouraged him to stick with it. "They recognized that it came easily for me and told me I was talented," he said from his Manhattan studio.

Ogunade began creating stained-glass works in 2000 after being introduced to the medium by a friend. "It was easy for me to say yes to the glass because I grew up going to Catholic churches seeing stained images on the windows every Sunday. I think of those windows and it moves me. I feel as if something has touched my soul."

> "It was easy for me to say yes to the glass because I grew up going to Catholic churches seeing stained images on the windows every Sunday. I think of those windows and it moves me."

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Mother with Twins, $3,500, below The Wood Carver, $3,500

While Ogunade studied art history, he was drawn to the Modern Masters Kandinsky and Picasso, whom he credits with influencing his style. "I use abstraction and figurative techniques with bright colors."

Co-owner of HB Studio Art with artist Hudson George, Ogunade says most of their art is on display at Caroline Designs in New York City. "W can create a one-of-a-kind stained-glass item for anyone as a gift, for the home or office, or for organizations and churches." Modest wallets beware. Be prepared to make "an investment" in the work, like any piece of fine art. Have a design idea of your own? No problem. Custom-made works utilizing colors that match your décor can be created. The work produced is superior and the service is fast and dependable. To view existing stained glass art by Ogunade and George, contact Caroline Designs at 212/862-0092.

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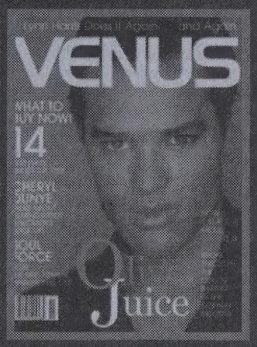

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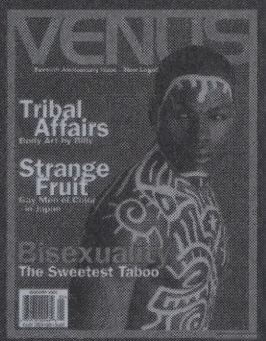

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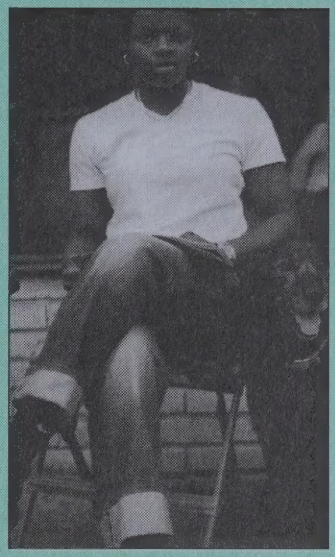

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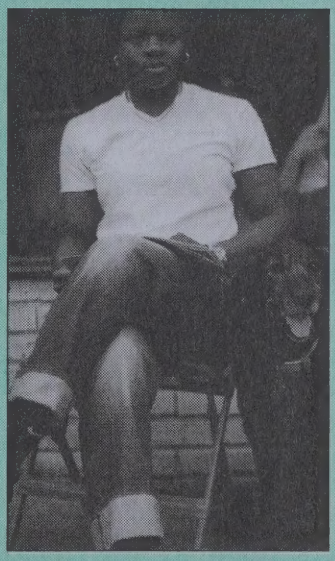

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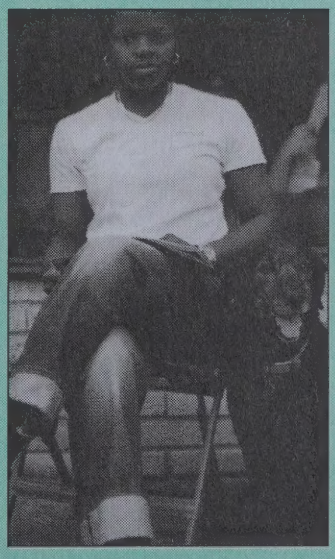

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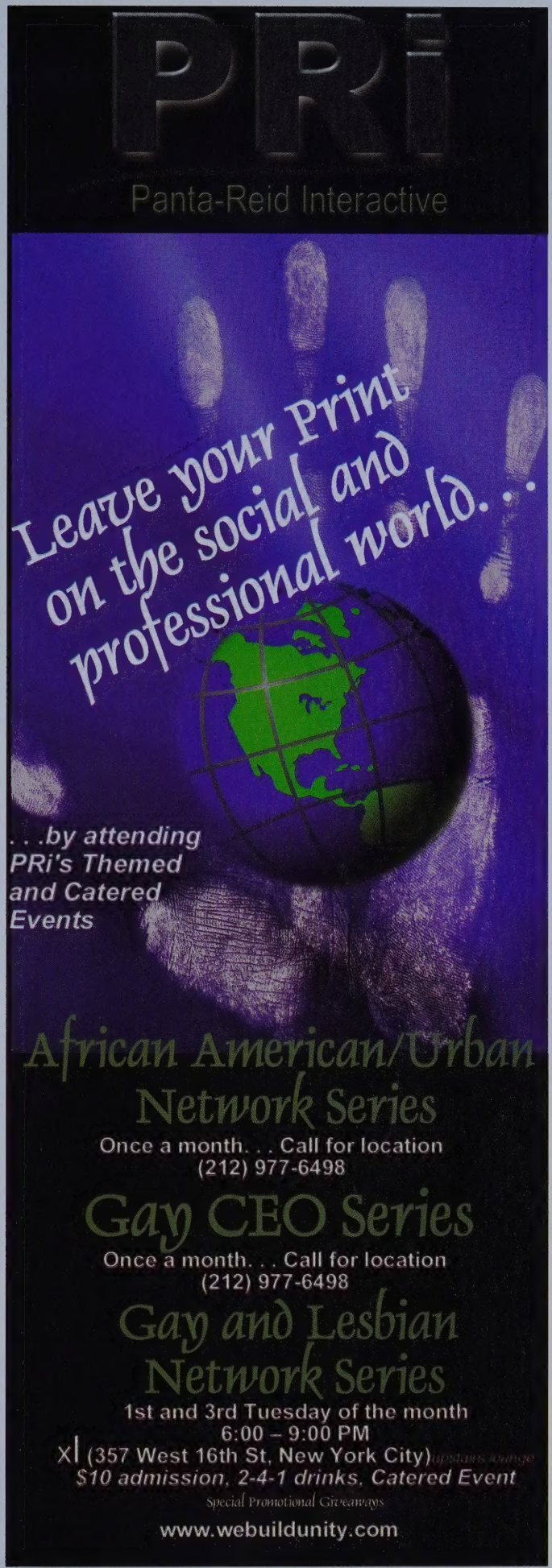
portraits in jazz

by the artist frederick j. brown

Frederick J. Brown is one of America's most prolific expressionist artists, often described as a rule breaker with his own distinct style. Combining his interest in jazz and blues music, Native American and African culture, primitive folklore, and European religions, his paintings chronicle the human experience.

The works celebrate trailblazers who have shaped and directed American culture, confirming Brown's reputation as a modern American storyteller. Among the icons and cultural heroes Brown pays tribute to are Louis Armstrong, Ornette Coleman, B. B. King, Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, Stagger Lee, John Henry, and Crazy Horse. The traveling exhibit, "Frederick J. Brown: Portraits in Jazz, Blues and Other Icons" is now showing until Sept. 1, 2002, at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Mo. Call 816/753-5784 or visit www.kemper-art.org for more information



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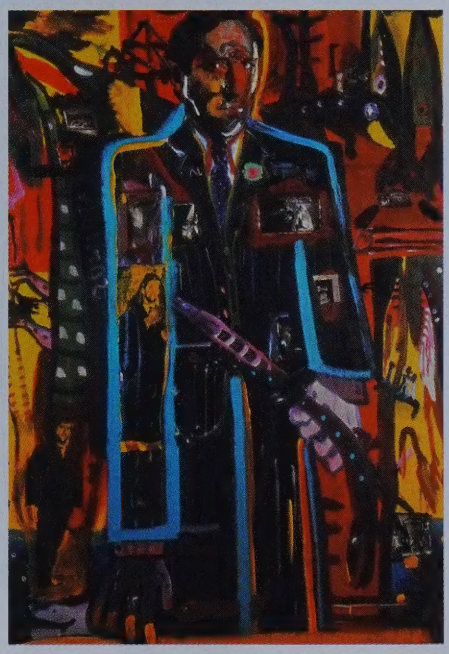

From the Collection of the artist, Carefree, AZ
Bleeker Street, 1981; oil paint on linen, [on pg. 36]
Top left, John Alexander, 1985; oil paint on linen
Top right, Ornette Coleman, 1992; oil paint on canvas,
Here, They Had the Right to Sing the Blues, 1995; acrylic paint on canvas

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Arp Stool

A fluid sweep of maple combines a great look with surprising comfort and a touch of lower back support. The maple glides across a rugged, chromed steel frame with footrest to complete a stool that will earn compliments both on how it looks and how it sits ($250). www.chiasso.com

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Disco Swing Glass

Stylish glassware always makes a spectacular hostess gift (guaranteed to get you invited back). Or keep them for yourself to add life to any party! ($11) www.chiasso.com

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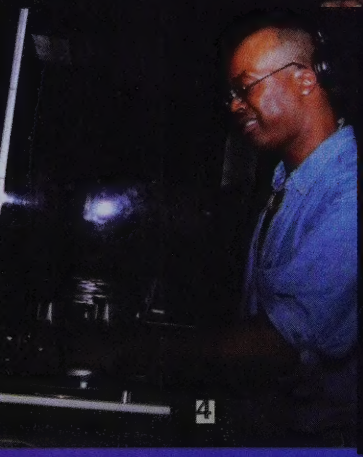
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Co-sponsored by HBO, Skyy BLUE, and The National Association of Gay & Lesbian Journalists, D.C. Chapter

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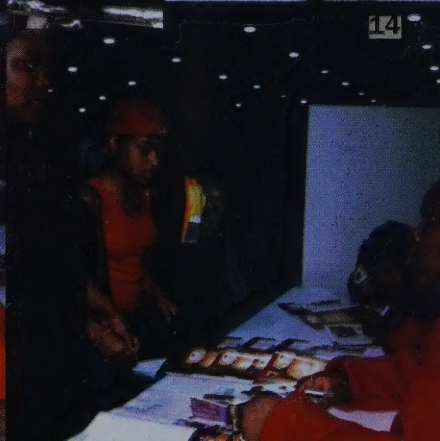
14

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1. HoneyB Boxing & Entertainment's Jeff "Mr. Hive" Harp- CFO ; Heavyweight Champ- Kecia "Awesome" Snow, Featherweight Champ- Alicia "Slick" Ashley, and CEO Tiffany Church accept the Venus Spirit Award from Publisher Charlene Cothran 2. MC for the evening, Robbyne Kaamil works the house 3. Promoter James Sanders accepts a Venus Award for Earl Folkes and DC Pride 4. DJ Calvin Smith on the ones and twos. 5. Jazz vocalist Carmen Barbour serenades our guests 6. Charlene Cothran, "Slick" and "Awesome" 7. Poet Gorden James entertains with one of his several characters. 8. Tye Lasiter, E. D. of African American Lesbians United, AALU wins a Skyy Blue door prize. 9. Damon Bolden, volunteer; Rhonda Smith, NLGJA member and writer for Washington Blade; and NLGJA member Kai Wright with his partner Mark Bailey hosted the evening with Venus volunteers. 10. Guest enjoy a Caribbean buffet 11. Producer Don El Johnson and HBO's Quincy Ballon look on 12. 13. 14. "Slick", Gorden James and "Awesome" meet their fans and sign autographs at the Venus booth during DC Pride's Black Gay.

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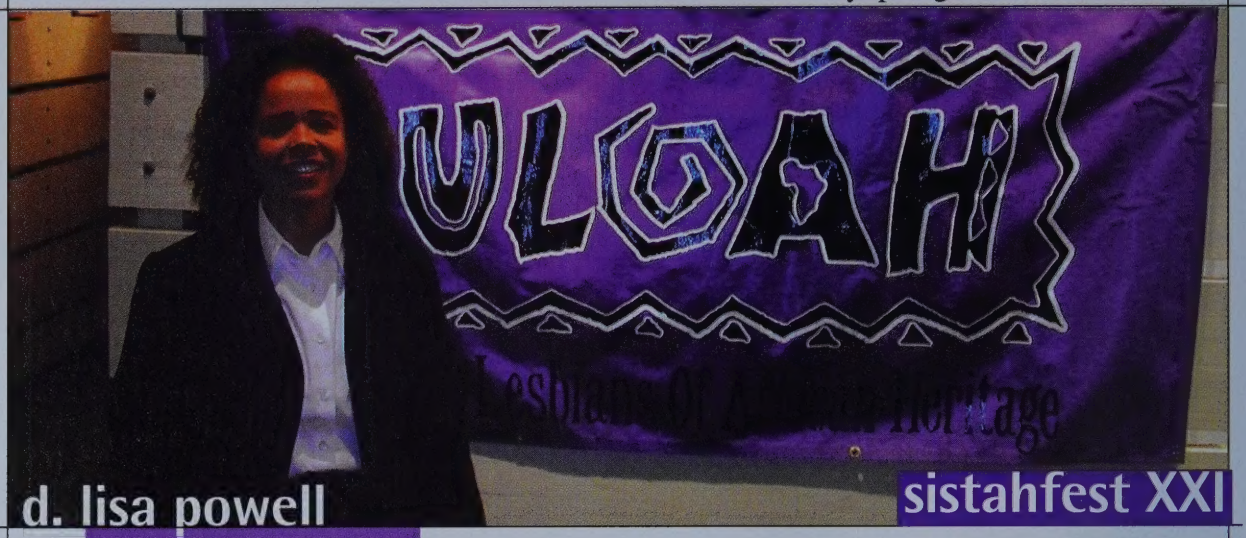


"We are making the world safe for black lesbians."

united lesbians of African heritage hire full-time executive to run daily tasks

Just a walk across the famed Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, Calif., will be the site for the Sistahfest XII by United Lesbian s of African Heritage (ULOAH), an organization for Black lesbians in Los Angeles.

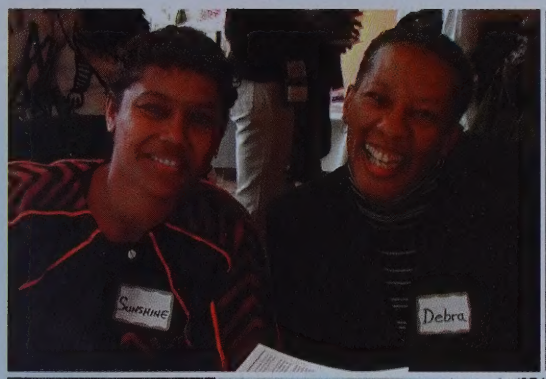
The group's commitment to protecting the privacy of attendees draws Black lesbians from all walks of life to their annual festival. Since 1989, ULOAH has supported thousands of women with strong programming and a place to call home. The introduction of their first executive director, D. Lisa Powell, marks a milestone for ULOAH's growth and progress. "We have created the nation's oldest and largest Black lesbian organization of its kind through the tireless efforts of skilled community volunteers. However, the reach, role, and daily demands of ULOAH call for full-time staff support. I'm proud to serve," said Powell.

The mission, said Powell, is "to focus on creating social change, building a strong Black lesbian community, and advancing the broader LGBT movement. We use every strategy we can including visibility, education, media, cultural work, and personal mentoring. Part of our ongoing work is to get the word out about ULOAH's mission and how we are making the world safe for Black lesbians."

The organization's signature event is Sistahfest. Planning an event of this magnitude takes months of works. "I blinked and it was a done deal—2001 that is," said Sistahfest Chair Debra E. Mackey, who is working to fine tune the festival experience. "As many of you know, we changed locations, and according to the surveys, the change was embraced and enjoyed." Plans for 2002 include adding cozier dorms and a golf cart shuttle service. This year will also feature a "Tap That Ass" contest at the Saturday Bar-B-Q, late-night swims, and delicious food along with their usual array of dazzling workshops.

As often happens with change, Mackey admitted some challenges regarding room assignments, parking, and dining arrangements last year. Most of the issues were handled successfully on-site. "It was a 'learn as we go' experience. We could have handled some issues better as many people noted on their exit surveys. We'll be ready this year."

As always, volunteers are needed, so don't wait. Call the ULOAH office now and sign up. Mackey said, "Here's your chance to not just talk about what needs to be done but to help make it happen." For more information, call 323/960-5051 or visit www.uloah.com.



1. [l] Sunshine Daye, ULOAH Co-chair and Debra Mackey, ULOAH board member/Co-Chair,SISTAHfest Co-chair; 2. Women enjoying a workshop; 3. Sistahs celebrating early registration.

Healing Works

The National Lesbian Health Conference: Healing Works! will be held in Washington, D.C., Sept. 26-28, 2002. One of the goals of the conference is to connect health-care activists, advocates, providers, researchers, policy makers, educators, clients, and caregivers for the purpose of networking, information sharing, and support.

The conference is organized by the Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer. Founded in 1990, the organization's mission is to deliver direct services and support to lesbians with cancer, their partners, and caregivers; to educate lesbians about cancer; and to promote lesbian health issues in national and local arenas. For more information, visit www.maunerproject.org.

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fire & ink:

September 19-22, 2002
University of Illinois-Chicago

a writer's festival for glbt people of African descent

Fire & Ink: A Writer's Festival for GLBT People of African Descent will be held at the University of Illinois at Chicago from Thursday through Sunday, Sept. 19-22, 2002. Fire & Ink is sponsored by the Department of African-American Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Northwestern University's Department of African American Studies and Program in Gender Studies, University of Chicago's Lesbian and Gay Studies Project, and Affinity Community Services of Chicago.

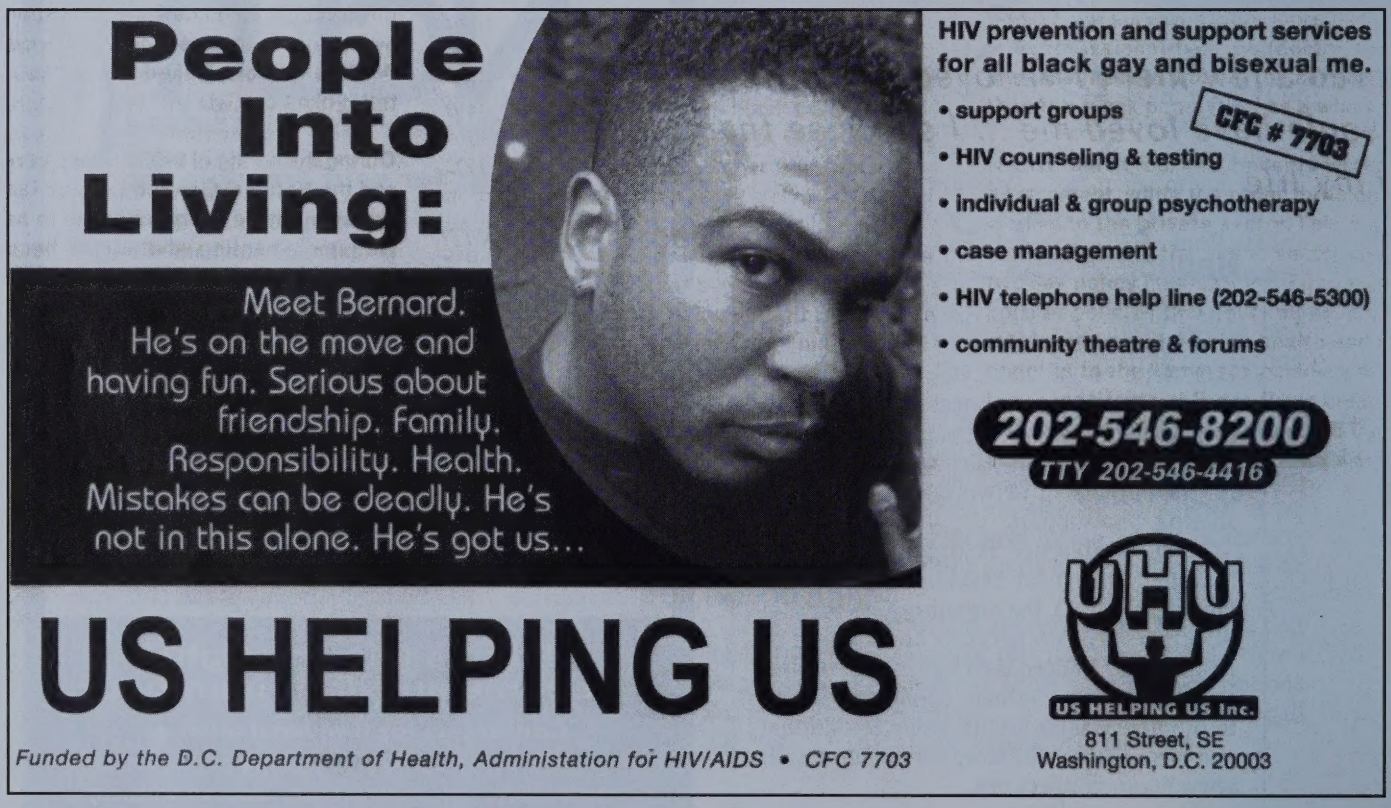
Join conference organizers Sharon Bridgforth, Dorothy Randall Gray, Reginald Harris, G. Winston James, and Lisa C. Moore in this historic celebration of the legacy bequeathed by ancestors such as Audre Lorde, Essex Hemphill, Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, Pat Parker, and Melvin Dixon. Fire & Ink will bring together GLBT writers, thinkers, teachers, publishing, and other media professionals of African descent to discuss the position and importance of African Diasporic GLBT literature, culture, and artistic expression in an effort to contribute to the development, longevity, and professional growth of our artistic community.

Fire & Ink will offer panel discussions, workshops, readings by established and emerging GLBT artists of African descent, as well as other opportunities to network with artists and professionals from across the nation. Thomas Glave, Fulbright Scholar and 1997 recipient of the prestigious O. Henry Award for Fiction, will deliver the keynote address. Presenters will include Samuel Delany, Keith Boykin, C.C. Carter, Cheryl Clarke, Jewelle Gomez, James Earl Hardy, Dwight A. McBride, Reginald Shepherd, Pamela Sneed, and Marvin K. White, among others.

Registration is $75 if pre-registered by Aug. 9; $100 thereafter and on-site. A $50 daily pass will also be offered. To register, make your check payable to Affinity Community Services and mail it along with your contact information to: Lisa C. Moore, P.O. Box 15571, Washington, D.C. 20003.

Special rates are available at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, 506 W. Harrison St., Chicago, IL 60607. Call 312/957-9100 for reservations. Mention the Fire & Ink Conference in order to get the $129 conference rate. The Holiday Inn is three blocks from the conference site. You can view information about the Holiday Inn by visiting www.hidowntown.com.

The Quality Inn, 1 Midcity Plaza (Madison at Halsted), Chicago, IL, is located about a mile from UIC. Call 312/829-5000 and ask for their UIC conference rate of $89.



ave The Date

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In The Mean Time

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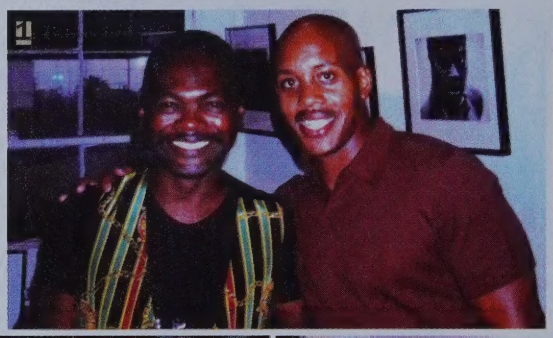

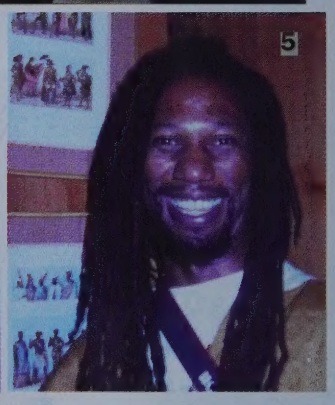

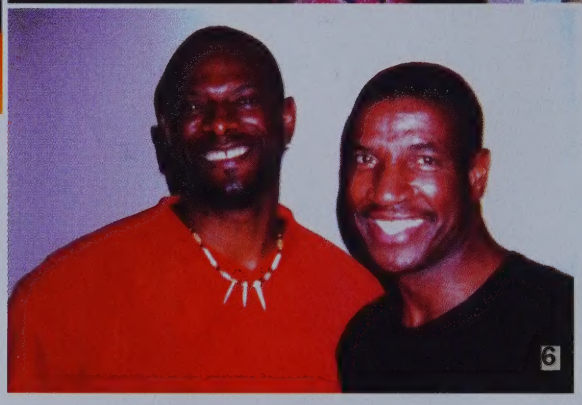

Photography by Greg McNeil

1. *[l]* Stanley Bennett Clay, *author, producer, writer, and* Bryan Edney, *educator* 2. Jeffrey King, *Founder & CEO of In The Meantime Men's Group, Inc. with* John Price, *clairvoyant.* 3. Tony Salas, *actor* 4. Nathan Hall, *producer with* Peyton Chapell, *realtor* 5. Ronald Jackson, *artist* 6. Charles McWells, *actisvist with* Gary Gregory, *L.A. businessman.*

If you or someone you love dearly is an African-American same-gender-loving man who has not heard of In The Meantime, then there's definitely unclaimed treasure waiting for your acquisition. In The Meantime, L.A.'s African-American men's group, is a richly rewarding non-profit organization designed to empower Black men on the journey to live their best life.

It is a safe place intended for the execution of a vision that founder Jeffrey C. King approached a small group of his peers with back in December 1999. King, however, is unabashedly resolute with the belief that this sphere for dynamic exchange and healing is beyond him, and he has dutifully worked in service to the power that he feels moved him to begin filling a void in the African-American same-gender-loving male community.

"Our mission is to create a safe and supportive environment for men of African descent. We focus on issues that directly affect our community such as spirituality, relationships, health, and economics." King was driven to form a group that could move with the

continued on page 89

Jon diagnosed HIV-positive.

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Heading Back to Mother Africa: A Writer's Journey to GHANA

words and images by Douglas Eric Murphy

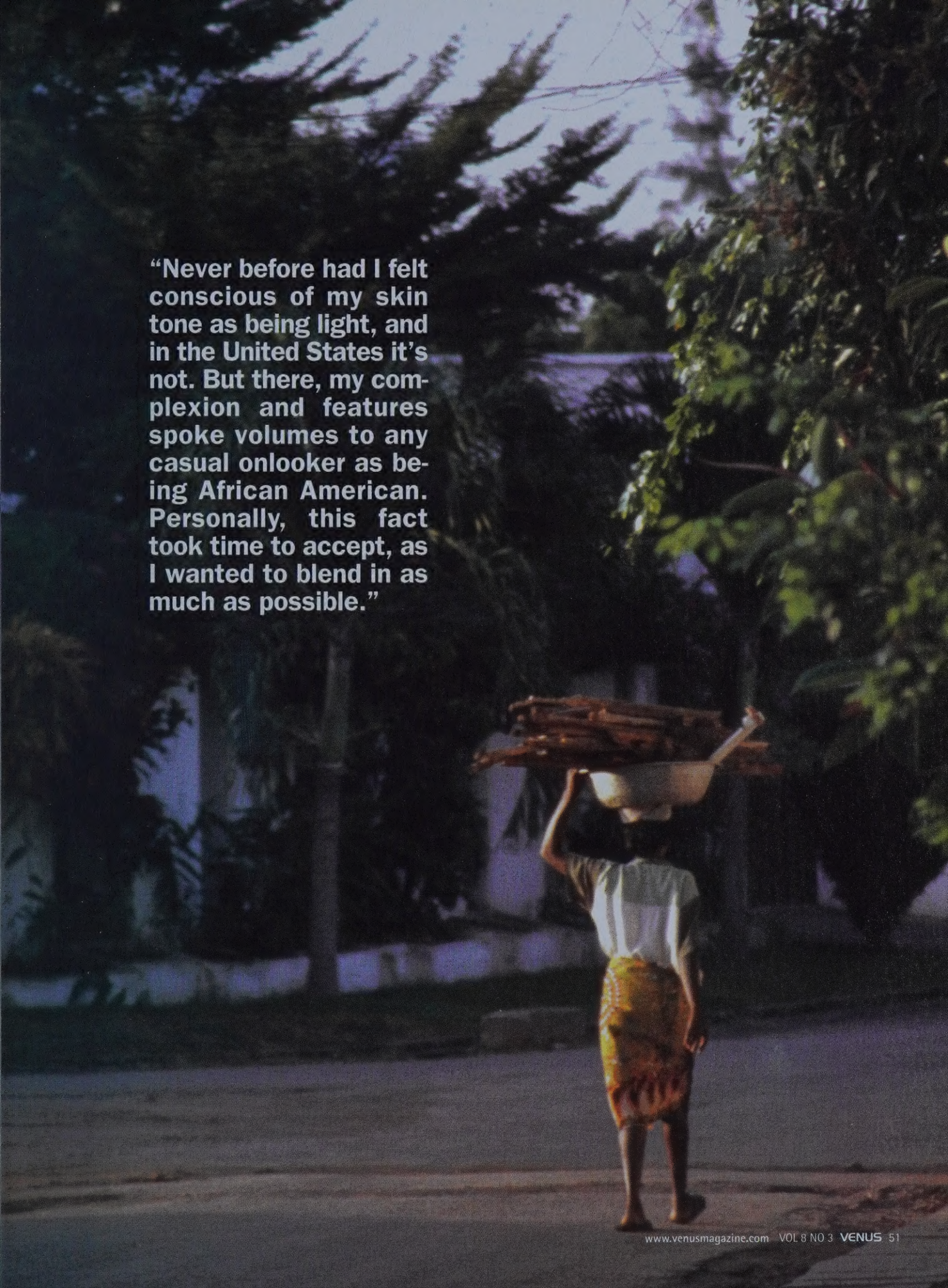
Some time last Christmas, my mother asked me to accompany her on a month-long trip she had begun planning to Ghana. She dreamed of going there as a Peace Corps volunteer, but after marriage, children, and a career as a social worker, that dream was deferred—until recently. Friends of our family who had transplanted to Accra, Ghana, invited her to visit. Retired now, my mother began planning this trip in earnest. Wanting to share this experience with someone else from my family, she invited me to accompany her. Fortunately, my health and personal calendar didn't prevent me from going like it did for my father and brother, respectively. Now I was able to fulfill a personal vow of making Africa my first destination for travel outside of the United States.

Planning for this journey, I familiarized myself with Ghana's history, geography, noteworthy sites, and virtually anything pertaining to the country so as to maximize my time there. Geographically, Ghana's calm coastal border enabled easy access for Western merchants interested in her rich interior's vast gold fields, ivory, ebony, and cocoa. The ensuing trans-Atlantic slave trade increased her desirability as a port of call for these merchants, culminating in Ghana's coast being hit heavily, and (arguably) hardest of all of West Africa. As numerous Africans from the region and the interior were enslaved, many were brought to Ghana and left the African continent through her Atlantic border. Realizing this history added a personal significance to this trip, as my first journey to Africa would begin through Ghana.

Arrival in Cantemant

As our departure date arrived, our excitement could not be contained. After months of planning, and anticipation, we hardly noticed the tail end of the rains from Ghana's second rainy season that September. Our reception at the airport was warm and loving as our friends Sarah and Ian Tweetie greeted us. From there we drove to their beautiful home. Later that day, my mother and I moved into our room at a bed and breakfast (B&B) in their neighborhood (a 10-minute walk) in a beautiful section of Accra called Cantemant. We could not believe our luck! Both the B&B and Cantemant in general were more picturesque and lush than we could have imagined. Yards were filled with flowering gardens and plants. Blooming orchids and fruit-bearing trees kept the air fragrant while homes and statuesque palms outlined roads. It would be much later in our trip when I realized how fortunate we were with the weather. The only rainy day we experienced throughout our stay was on the day we arrived. Generally, the weather was clear and balmy, upper 80s with continuous coastal breezes.

As a photographer, I took advantage of every setting I experienced in Ghana. Keeping my camera with me at all times, I was a sure giveaway to many as a tourist. Camera aside, my mother and I stood out considerably as foreigners because of our physical features and complexion. Never before had I felt conscious of my skin tone as being light, and in the United States it's not. But there, my complexion and features spoke volumes to any casual onlooker as being African American. Personally, this fact took time to accept, as I wanted to blend in as much as possible. Just the same, these differences didn't matter as virtually all the Ghanaians I met seemed genuinely interested in meeting me and were almost honored and humbled that I made such efforts to visit their country. Many Ghanaians commented, "You've come home." All of the heresy I heard and even read of Africans viewing African Americans with disdain did not apply in Ghana. Communicating was not difficult either. Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah, chose English as the official language rather than imposing one indigenous language over another. As there are over a dozen different kingdoms with varying cultures populating the country, Nkrumah believed one language that all could agree upon would assist unification, which it most likely did as Ghana has maintained peace since its independence from Great Britain.



"Never before had I felt conscious of my skin tone as being light, and in the United States it's not. But there, my complexion and features spoke volumes to any casual onlooker as being African American. Personally, this fact took time to accept, as I wanted to blend in as much as possible."

Our days began early, with coffee or tea, morning breads, and fresh fruit. Later, we usually walked to Sarah and Ian's for a visit, prior to setting out for the day. One of our first visits was to W.E.B. DuBois' last home and resting area, also n Cantemant. He made Ghana his home as an expatriate, denouncing the United States and protesting its civil rights policies. We also visited outdoor markets, some as large as several city blocks; museums and cultural centers; as well as Ghana's spectacular beaches. One afternoon, we took in a trip to the University of Ghana and toured its beautiful campus and libraries. Additionally, we stayed a night in Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, and visited our hostess' childhood village and home.

Life Outside Accra

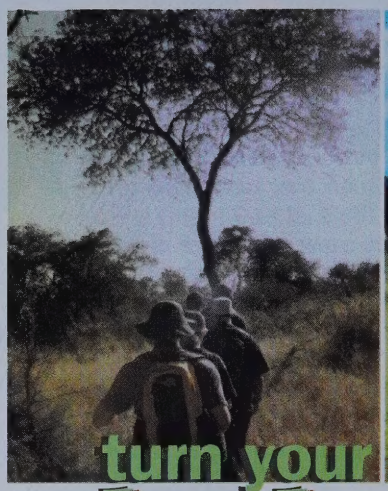
Later in our trip we spent a day in the Volta region. Starting off early, we arrived at Nkrumah Dam on the Volta River, supplier of Ghana's electricity. While overlooking the dam from a neighboring hotel's picturesque veranda, we enjoyed a robust breakfast including fresh fruit, eggs, hot cereals, and traditional breads. The remainder of the day we cruised Volta Lake on an old, yet colorful, open barge. During the ride, we were treated to a delicious buffet including roasted guinea hen. The barge also included an open bar and live juju music. Volta Lake is incredibly vast; it's the largest manmade lake in West Africa as we saw up close that afternoon. Similarly, we spent a day visiting Aburi. Located a couple of hours outside of Accra, Aburi hosts a beautiful botanical garden built by the British around the turn of the century. Here, too, the settings were breathtaking, for within the gardens are plants and trees representing all of the colonies that Great Britain once possessed. Additionally, this vegetation attracts a variety of birds and butterflies in colors that were spellbinding. Sitting at a high elevation, Aburi's vistas too, were beyond words, as the surrounding forested rolling hills lead to the Atlantic.

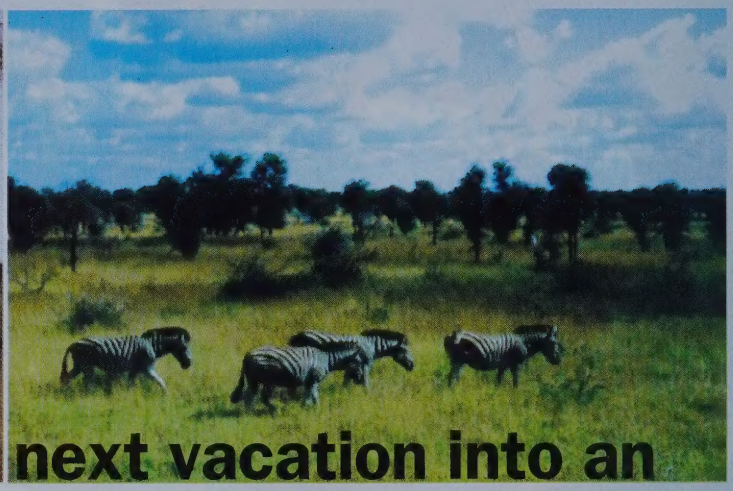
Sharing my interest in the African Diaspora, my mother and I had an overnight stay at a B&B near two castles involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade: Elmina and Cape Coast Castle. Both castles are UNESCO world historical sites. While there, we took in tours that were staggeringly informative. Nothing could have prepared us for those trips, as we saw and learned of the process of enslavement, yet neither of us has any regret in completing them. My mother commented that she felt as if she were "touching souls," while walking through a men's holding cell at Elmina Castle. I concurred; overcoming the physical and mental horrors that arose within those castles was a true testament of the power within the human spirit. I later visited two other similar structures to photograph: Forts Good Hope and Patience. Getting to those destinations, two hours outside of Accra, was no small feat as both forts were located in obscure coastal towns overlooked by most mapmakers. But the fulfilling feeling I got after those excursions was akin to a personal Mecca. Positively amazing!

The Last Leg of the Journey

On our last day in Ghana, we attended an Ashanti celebration. A friend of our host's father is an Ashanti chief: Oyeeman Wereko Ampem II. His community was celebrating the 25th anniversary of his (instoolment) or coronation. The pageantry and festivities that day were magnificent. Never before had I seen such dazzling colors, intricate kinte cloth, and handmade gold all worn by the chief, local elders, and their procession. How fortunate we were.

My journeys in Ghana were the most moving adventures I've experienced. It brought my mother and I closer together. We've always shared a strong bond, but this trip allotted us the time to begin seeing one another as more than just mother and son, but as one adult relating to another. Old issues dating back to my adolescence up through life changes and career choices were discussed openly. Being so far removed from "home" arguably allowed us enough comfort to delve into topics that may have been too difficult for us to fully flush out in a familial setting. Seeing how life in Ghana could be precarious and fleeting enhanced our ability to take full advantage of the precious time we were sharing. I believe the two of us returned from Ghana knowing each other better, strengthening our love. The trip enhanced my outlook on who I am and the place from which my forbearers originated. I'm definitely returning to Ghana, but I'm also curious of other African locales. At this point, North Africa's Mediterranean coast and the Sahara are calling loudest.





turn your next vacation into an Adventure

words and images by
James McKissic

"If you are relatively low-maintenance, can go without showering for a few days, and are able to hold your breath and not move while a lion struts through your campsite—then you may have what it takes to try adventure touring."

As a child, while my other soon-to realize-we-were-gay friends stood in the mirror lip-synching to Whitney Houston or Lisa Lisa and the Cult Jam, I was dreaming of being Jane Goodall, traipsing through the rainforests of Africa, inspecting elephant dung and talking to chimpanzees. Over the years, my passion for all things natural has wedged its way into everything from my choice of college courses to my home decorating style. And, as a traveler, I have taken every opportunity to experience the natural world: walking a portion of the Appalachian Trail, ropes courses in the Great Smoky Mountains, hiking in the Black Forest, getting across the dance floor at the Warehouse. Adventure travel came easy to me. This year I celebrated my birthday by taking a 12-day trip to South Africa. Most of my friends and relatives were not overly excited.

"I've heard that Africa is wonderful."

"There is nothing like going home."

"Make sure that you bring me something back."

"Be careful."

But, when I told them that I'd be camping and hiking for the majority of my stay, this is generally what I heard:

"Have you lost your mind?"

And, of course, "Why do you always have to do crazy stuff?"

And, there were times, on the flight over, (thanks to turbulence and the complimentary Virgin Atlantic drinks) that I felt as if I had lost my mind. Yet, on the first night, as I lay (in my tent) on the belly of the Motherland with only a thin piece of canvas separating her from me, listening to the clicks of millions of insects and the yells of hyenas in the distance, I knew I had made the right choice. My time trekking through the Lowveld not only gave me the opportunity to see nature on her own terms, but allowed me numerous opportunities to connect with my African same-gender-loving brothers and sisters in their homeland.

All travel is an adventure, but like increasing numbers of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people of color, adventure travel/touring is

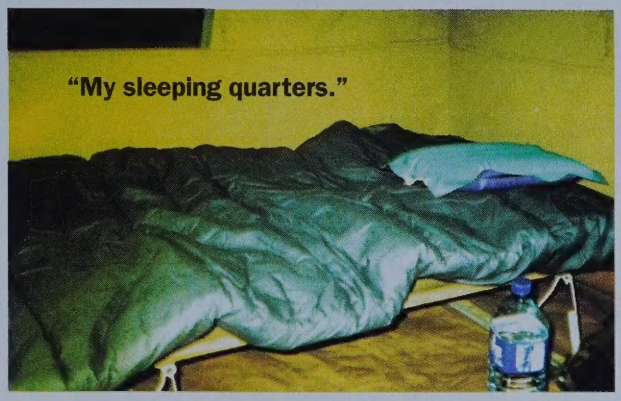
becoming my holiday of choice. Adventure travel is defined as a trip or travel with the specific purpose of participation to explore a new experience, often involving perceived risk or controlled danger associated with personal challenges, in a natural environment or exotic outdoor setting.[1]

If you are relatively low-maintenance, can go without showering for a few days, and are able to hold your breath and not move while a lion struts through your campsite (this really happened to me)—then you may have what it takes to try adventure touring. But, before setting off, with backpack and canteen in tow, there are a few things you should do.a few things you should do.

1. Explore your adventure travel/tour options:
Adventure tours range in price from a few hundred dollars to well into the thousands. Do a personal assessment. Just how rugged can you go? Most of the lower-priced tour options include a great deal of on-foot travel and camping, while higher-priced options may balance camping with lodge or hotel stays. Do your research. A wonderful place to start is www.gorp.com. Always follow up by speaking directly to someone from your tour company. Ask for references. Find out exactly what to expect on your tour. You won't make friends if doing the dishes is a part of what's required of travelers and you don't want to get dishpan hands.

2. Investigate the social climate for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered travelers:
Travel sensibly. Although many destinations around the world have a much more liberal opinion of homosexuality than we do here at home, it is always better to be safe. Use the Internet to visit travel sites targeted to same-gender-loving consumers. Post your questions and concerns and allow others (travelers and even natives) to tell you what to expect. A good place to start is the Thorntree at www.lonelyplanet.com. Most adventure tours take place outside of large urban areas, and often involve spending the night in small villages—it makes sense to get the local perspective and tips from those who've been there. Moreover, it won't hurt to ask your tour company directly about their comfort with GLBT participants. Besides learning about local gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered life/issues, you might even find out where the best bookstores, coffeehouses, shopping, and "family" bars are located. Remember that as you make your way through the wild, there will be enough to worry about (puff adders, for example) without homophobia rearing its ugly head.

3. Get a medical check-up:
Visit your doctor and inform him or her that you will be traveling abroad and spending a great deal of time outdoors. Do this early, as there may be medications that you will have to take over time to build up your immunity to native diseases. Most doctors will recommend that you get a Hepatitis A vaccine, and begin taking any medications specific to the area in which you will travel.



If you are planning on being sexually active, make sure to take protection—you can't run down to the corner drugstore in the jungle. On returning, it is wise to get another checkup since some tropical diseases won't begin showing symptoms until a few weeks after infection.

4. Buy some travel insurance:
Be on the safe side. Although you are practically guaranteed to return home unscathed (to the chagrin of all of your naysayer friends and family members), you never know. You will be outside. You will be taking chances. You might even be in countries whose governments are not as "stable" as our own. Travel insurance is relatively inexpensive, and covers everything from lost luggage to emergency flights home. Travel insurance will feel like an invisible security blanket when sitting around the campfire in Kruger Park listening to stories of jaguar attacks.

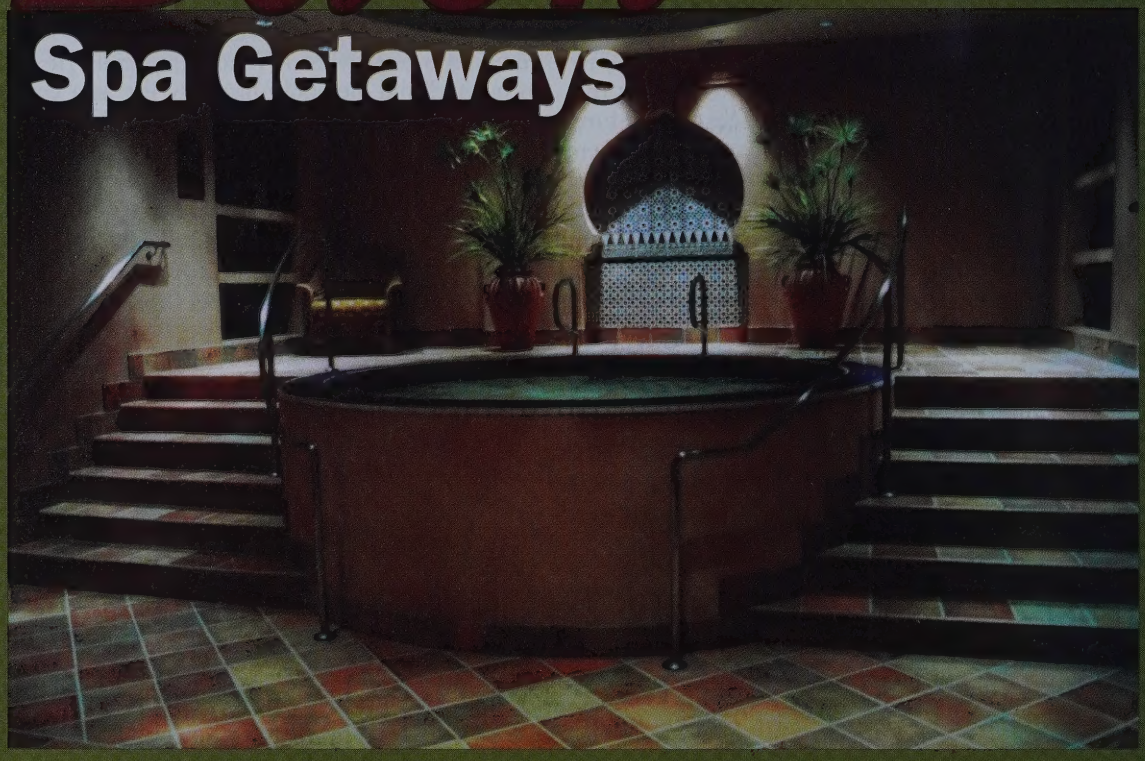
5. Open up:
Among my most priceless memories is the time that I sat in a Johannesburg "colored" bar with one of the tour company's employees, a Vende tribesman. He came out to me and told me about his early life as a young, gay man in his ancestral homeland. We shared stories of coming out, of finding ourselves, and what it meant to be Black, gay men so many thousands of miles apart. Spending time in nature, with a group of campers from around the world (Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand) allowed me to converse about American cultural imperialism, the global image of Black Americans—damn you, Jerry Springer—and make one-on-one connections, which illuminated how very similar we are as human beings.

Adventure travel may not be for everyone, but with the wide range of locales and tour options available, almost anyone with a little wanderlust and a low tolerance for mosquitoes can find the trip of his dreams. After all, when you return from your vacation, would you want to pass around the same old photos of Big Ben and the Eiffel Tower? Or would you rather wow Big Mama and them with a shot of you bungee jumping near Victoria Falls?

James H. McKissic is a freelance writer who manages an urban education initiative in Connecticut.1 Heidi M. Sung: Definition of Adventure Travel: Conceptual Framework for Empirical Application from the Providers' Perspective. www.hotel-online.com/Neo/Trends/AsiaPacificJournal/AdventureTravel.html

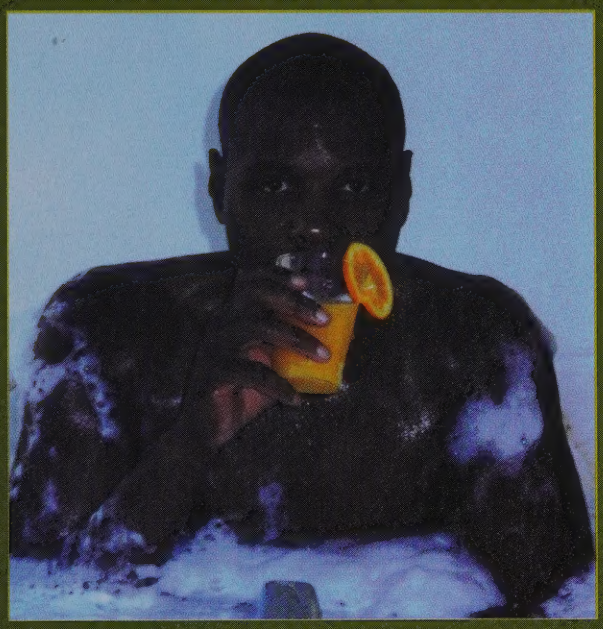
Get Your Groove Back

Spa Getaways



exclusive resort reviews by

Michael Andre Adams



In order to thrive with a reasonable degree of sanity and overall well-being, some form of a disconnection to the world must be routine. To do so in a society that openly appreciates a work ethic leading to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and other disorders perpetuated by stress, one runs the risk of being labeled as lazy or degenerative. And if you get caught up in believing such nonsense I can guarantee that instead of you working it, "it" is probably working you.

My personal advice is to find a way to connect with the true essence of our existence in each and every day of your existence. In addition, I take a minimum of one trip every month. The Grenada Jazz Festival was my most recent experience where Gerald Albright, Peabo Bryson, Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, and the debut of Oran Coltrane, son of John and Alice, were the Calgon that took me away.

Five glorious days later I flew into Montego Bay, Jamaica, for a stay at the magnificent Round Hill Hotel and Villas, where *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, was filmed. The additional time afforded me the opportunity to review and restructure personal goals to the tune of the new Musiq and Will Downing CDs. There were even a few blank periods where I did absolutely nothing and was fine with it. I take that back. I actually disconnected in order to reconnect with self. And that felt good.

Groove Quarters

RoundHill Hotel, Jamaica
Through Dec.14, 2002, Deluxe Oceanfront Room in the Pineapple House $310/pp plus Wellness Plan (all-inclusive [meals] and SPA plan) $190/pp, www.roundhilljamaica.com

The Spa at LaQuinta
This spa offers you the ultimate retreat. The outdoor spa experience takes precedence. From a therapeutic soak to a signature Celestial Shower under the stars. Resort Casitas $295, Sept.-Dec.2002, Spa treatments vary in cost, Grape Seed Crush Glow: $90, 80-minute Shiatsu: $170 www.laquintaresort.com

Michael enjoys a sunlit Celestial Shower and feasts on the fine dining at The Spa at LaQuinta. A Lobster Delight, above. Here, the Banana-Pineapple Dream.

The Grape Seed Exfoliating Facial at The Spa at La Quinta

Pineapple-papaya wrap

While in Jamaica at Bunty's Cottage Wellness Center, I was greeted by spa director, Janice McCleod, with an ice-cold glass of a refreshing watermelon-based beverage. The air was full of freshly diced and blended pineapple, mango, papaya, cucumber, and other fruits, herbs, and vegetables, as the basis for the treatments to be performed. "With the help of elders who know what the plants do, all-natural concoctions were created," explained McCleod.

Created just for me and now available to all guests is Michael's Welcome to Bunty's Wellness Center. The treatment begins with a warm and fragrant lemongrass bath, followed by a full-body exfoliation made of a pineapple and lemongrass scrub to soften the skin, ease the mind, and even tempt the palate. In between the lemongrass-infused showers is a sea salt rub followed by a warm pineapple-papaya wrap prior to a hydrating citrus seal for the ultimate in moisturizing. You have not lived until you experience this treatment combining aromatherapy with a good old-fashioned rubdown. (Thanks Janice!)

Spa treatments vary from property to property as does price. Look to spend an average of $100 per treatment in your better day and destination spa facilities. Remember, you get what you pay for.

Sunlit shower

Where fountains and streams meander alongside picture-perfect floral beds, The Spa at La Quinta is the ultimate haven for rest and repose. I encourage you to experience their signature Celestial Shower treatment. In the confines of a sunlit shower stall, you are bombarded with hot and cold water from a barrage of angles for the most exhilarating shower you can imagine.

Grape seed exfoliation

If romance is what the doctor ordered, the Desert Champagne and Roses Ultimate Experience is the perfect prescription. The half-day process begins with a rose-scented bubble bath, less the rose petals (the petals tend to clog the drainage system, according to management). For me, a grape seed exfoliation was next using crushed grape seeds from California's Napa Valley wine region to scrub the entire body, followed by a grape seed oil moisturizer, a massage by Garry (if you're lucky) and a desert rose facial by Sally, the world's greatest aesthetician. The process is sure to leave you pampered, rejuvenated, and reconnected. I promise.

Spa Cuisine
At the fabulous Woodland's Spa breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served daily in the new Seasons restaurant, featuring "hunter" and "gatherer" portions of conscious Paleolithic cuisine.

Vegas Baby!

Elemis Day Spa
Whether you prefer Vegas or London, the Elemis Day Spa is a must! Try the Absolute Spa Ritual. From the soles of your feet to the tingling top of your scalp, embark on a complete journey to sensory heaven for the face and body with a prescribed Japanese Silk Booster Facial and Well-Being Massage. £145 2hrs
www.elemis.com or www.aladdincasino.com

e Get Your Groove Back Get You

e Viche Shower at The Woodlands Spa

The Welcome Touch

The relatively new Aladdin Resort Casino in Las Vegas is home to Elemis Spa, the premiere U.S. facility to follow its London counterpart. The feeling at Elemis is spiritually and essentially all for you. Each treatment begins with The Welcome Touch, whereby a warm aromatic application is made to the feet. The goal is to rid the body of the urban environment. Throughout the process your therapist will help you to realign each of the five senses using abdominal breathing techniques. Therapeutic treatments at Elemis are applied by incorporating a sequence of movements influenced by 10 cultures, including Hawaiian Lomi, Chinese Tui Na, Balinese, Indian Ayurvedic, Middle Eastern, Reflexology, Japanese Shiatsu, Reiki, Swedish, and Thai.

The Water Path

Designed with Feng Shui in mind, The Spa at the Nemacolin, a paradise just 61 miles south of Pittsburgh, is the perfect place to search and discover your personal fountain of youth while attaining balance along the way. Signature treatments include The Water Path, a therapeutic treatment where alternating temperatures stimulate circulation and improve blood and lymph flow followed by a warm and invigorating Swiss Shower. A soaking tub filled with Therapeutic Thermal Mineral Salts from the famous Sarvar Springs of Hungary comes just before a cool and concluding Swiss Shower rinse.

The Perfect Package

Available thru Nov. 9, 2002, Sun.-Thurs., Chateau $376 includes: Accommodations for one night (double occupancy), lunch in Seasons, all taxes and service charges, and your choice of two of the following services per person, per night (four total):
50-minute Swedish Massage
Any 50-minute Facial
Any 50-minute Body Ritual
Hydrating Manicure & Hydrating Pedicure
Take-Home Fitness Program
Woodlands Spa Robe
www.nemacolin.com

The Woodlands Spa and deck

The Thai Massage

Branded as a classic institution in spa therapy is the Canyon Ranch Health Resort. Take your pick from Tucson, Ariz.; Lenox, Mass.; or Las Vegas—inside the glamorous Venetian Casino. At Canyon Ranch, I had the pleasure of a first-time experience with Thai Massage Therapy with master therapist Alan. Unlike the relaxing service at Elemis Spa, my therapist was on a tight schedule with no time for chatter. Best of all the 55-minute session left my body feeling 17 again.

Beach front massage

Situated beneath palm trees swaying to the ocean breeze, I reveled in the splendor of the masseur's long and deep strokes during my first outdoor spa experience at the grand and glorious Wyndham Casa Marina Resort, in Key West, Fla. (www.casamarinakeywest.com). If you've never experienced a beach-front massage you've been cheated! Afterward, check out Mangoes on Duvall Street for an extraordinary meal. See page 24 for more restaurant details.

Concentrated milk bath

At The Doral Golf Resort and Spa in Miami try Crème De La Crème Hydrobath. Performed in an elongated tub with pulsating jets throughout, the treatment combines the therapeutic benefits of hydrotherapy with the soothing effects of aromatic and essential salts and oils. This gentle yet highly concentrated milk bath will leave your skin feeling smooth and supple while the force of the warm water works to relax the mind and body. A table massage is included.

Abroad and Beyond: The Road Less Traveled

words by Detria Thompson

We don't generally come from families in which our parents traveled abroad, much less from families with parents who traveled abroad and took the kids. Today there are encouraging emerging travel trends for African Americans and information on why and where we travel.

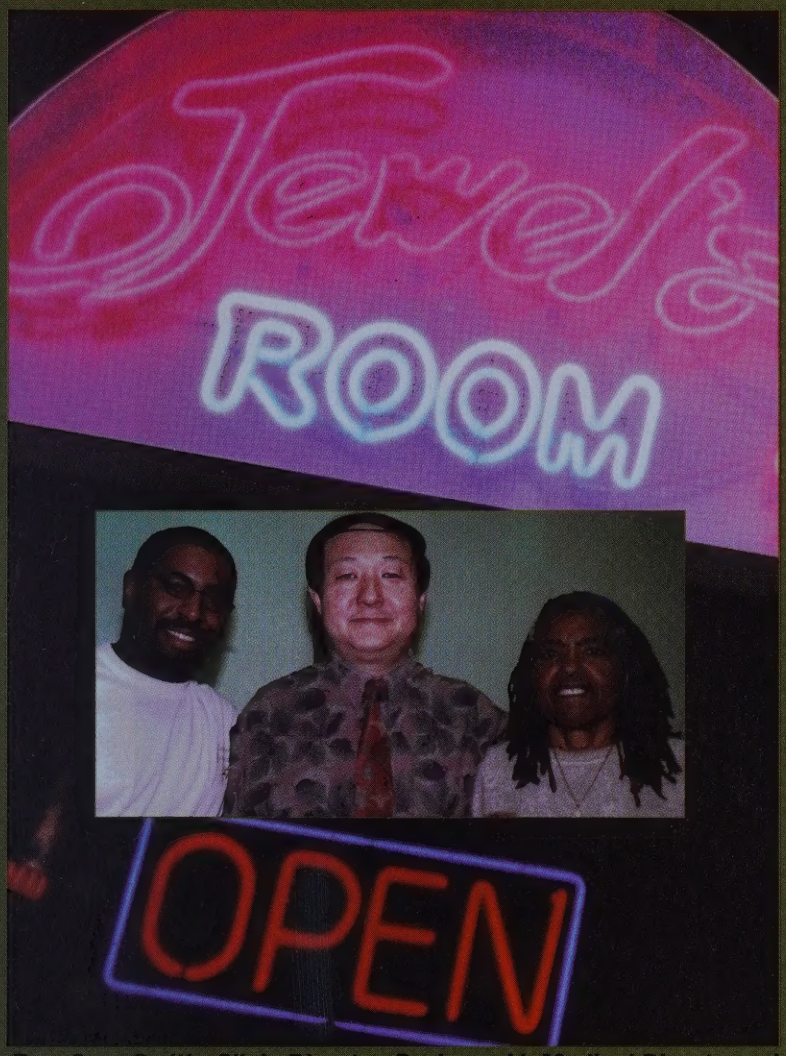
The Travel Industry Association of America released a survey, The Minority Traveler, last year and the report indicated that the number of African Americans taking trips has increased significantly in recent years. In fact, people of color are now a much sought after customer niche with U.S travel companies. according to the report, Back people make leisure travel plans primarily to visit relatives or to be entertained (concerts, conventions, theme parks, and gaming). Ninety-eight percent of Back respondents traveled solely in the 48 contiguous states, in many cases, to southern states. What about the remaining 2 percent? Survey results revealed that 1.5 percent of Blacks had traveled to the Caribbean. Only .5 percent of African American respondents had been to an international destination other than the Caribbean. Before I contacted a couple of African-American travel companies, I planned to explore ideas related to what I thought might be culturally specific reasons why Black folks may be disinclined to travel abroad, assuming money wasn't an obstacle to travel.

My assumptions were based anecdotally on conversations with friends and acquaintances. Were we more concerned with feeling comfortable due to lack of international travel exposure, preferring a real or perceived familiarity with our destination and the people there than white people? Based on historical truths around degrees of (non) acceptance by whites, were we (un) consciously more likely to have concerns about our physical and emotional safety in foreign countries, especially when there might be language barriers, regardless of what that countries racial norms actually were? In short, are we more risk-adverse in considering if and to what international destinations we visit? When I shared my ideas with the owners of two African-American travel companies, Thomas Dorsey, CEO of Soul of America (www.soulofamerica.com) and Paul Mixon of Honey Lets Travel (www.honeyletstravel.com), I was surprised to find they believe the primary factor determining whether or not black people travel internationally, to the Caribbean and beyond, was income, education, and to a lesser degree, prior exposure to travel. The higher our incomes and education level, the more likely we are to travel beyond U.S borders.

Dorsey provided this illustration about the link between accessibility to some international destinations and cost or what I'd call the 2 percent theory. Flight miles from Chicago to Paris are roughly equivalent to the mileage between Chicago and Senegal, but the cost to fly to Paris is cheaper by a wide margin. "Racism? " I wondered aloud. No. Supply and demand. At this point in time, there isn't enough demand for traveling to Senegal for airlines to profit. The irony is that many of us would love to travel to any country in Africa but don't consider Africa a first, second, or third option because of high airfares to this region of the world.

I've visited the Caribbean, Central, and South America. If all is well with my health and wealth, I'll visit Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe in the coming years. For those like myself, who don't have it like that, we can save money for trips and/or find creative and resourceful ways to cut travel and accommodation costs. Earth Watch, (www.earthwatch.org) for example, provides working vacation opportunities for volunteers who assist scientists in all over the globe data gathering for cultural and environmental conservation research projects. Their status as a charity organization means travel costs are tax-deductible.

After 9-11, many Americans cancelled or postponed travel plans. With the introduction of improved air travel safety standards, we're all much safer in airports and on planes today than before 9-11. Fortunately, the reality of safer air travel is beginning to catch up with the misperception that air travel is risky, and many Americans, including African Americans, are taking to the skies again. As world citizens and members of the African Diaspora, we owe it to ourselves to experience as much of the world as we can. Let's celebrate international travel.



Rev. Greg Smith, Clinic Director, Dr. Jovon Li, Medical Directorand Jewel Thais-Williams, Founder and Executive Director

Jewel's Room for Healing

On a blustery Los Angeles day, Jewel Thais-Williams, owner of the Catch One Disco and Community Center expanded her nearly 30-year ministry of affirmation and celebration into the area of holistic healing by gifting the community with a clinic, The Village Health Foundation.

How does a nightclub owner become a healer? Normally a robustly healthy person, Jewel endured a three-week illness from which the Village Health Foundation was "given" to her to birth. "During the time that I was ill, it was made clear to me what I was supposed to do." She accepted graciously and began her path back to wellness, all along the way, gathering strength and planning what is now the Village Health Foundation.

Thais-Williams sees her mission as "opening people up to new healing modalities," specifically, the poor, African and Hispanic people to whom these alternative therapies have been largely unknown. "Obesity, high blood pressure, HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, and diabetes are just a few of the conditions that can be helped by a holistic approach to health and wholeness," says Thais-Williams.

_G. B. Mann

getting there

Village Health Foundation
4073-75 W. Pico Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90019
Phone: 323/733-0471
Email: villagehealthfdn@aol.com

me'shell ndegeocello

neo-soul's funk goddess sounds off on shameless pride, confused black folks, motherhood, and the DL

words by Michael K. Watts

"I can't lie. I don't wanna be lying to myself. I don't wanna be lying to nobody else. This is who I am."

It's been almost three years since neo-soul singer-songwriter-bassist Me'Shell Ndegeocello let her fans read the pages of the metaphorical diary that chronicles her musical and spiritual journey. The latest chapter in her journey is laid out in her fourth album, *Cookie: The Anthropological Mixtape* (Maverick Records). It's the soundtrack for present-day Black folks, and the autobiographical soundtrack of a woman who knows who she is and how she got here.

Never before has Ndegeocello's music dealt so frankly with politics, Black culture and society, love and intimacy, and her own sexuality. Although she's spoken publicly about her bisexual lifestyle in the past, her recordings to date have been marked with ambiguous sexual points of view, leaving fans to make their own interpretations. Now at age 33, Ndegeocello has reached a spiritual space where she's willing to go there in her music.

"I can't lie. I don't wanna be lying to myself. I don't wanna be lying to nobody else. This is who I am," revealed Ndegeocello whose last name means "free like a bird" in Swahili. There's a serene assurance about her spirit as she speaks from her Oakland, Calif., home. But, her new music speaks for itself.

In her current single, the bounce-heavy "Pocketbook," she sings of the admiration of a fly sista (I like the way you switch when you walk by/Everything you know that you wanna try/Don't be ashamed 'cause I can make it feel real good). Then there's "Barry Farms," a song about a girl who has a boyfriend but still needs the touch of a woman's tongue to satisfy her on the "down-low" or "DL" (She couldn't love me without shame/She only wanted me for one thing). "'On the DL'—that just scares me," a bewildered Ndegeocello contemplated. "I'm not ashamed of it, so I don't feel I have to do anything on the DL. I think when you put something in the context of shame, it becomes dirty. It becomes unpleasant."

You sell your soul like you sell a piece of ass.
—from "Dead Nigga Blvd. Pt. 1"

Cookie is undeniably a funked-up, poetically charged, urban music masterpiece. The above lyric opens *Cookie* issuing a challenge for Black people to examine who they are and redefine themselves from this point forward. Ndegeocello believes that gross consumerism has bred a generation of name-brand fashion models and wannabe thugs who place material possessions above community and self-worth. She says Black people, especially Black men, need to tap into their emotional and spiritual selves. "I think a lot of people could learn from gay men," she offered. "This other energy is not [their] natural state of being."

The album is also packed with spoken word samples and collaborations with Talib Kweli, Lalah Hathaway, Caron Wheeler, and Marcus Miller. The album's most stand-out track is the dome-nodding "Hot Night," which samples a speech by revolutionary activist Angela Davis, Ndegeocello's good friend and mentor. "She's fine, she's beautiful, she's intelligent, and she was here in the 1960s when they were sending all our people to Vietnam to kill some illusionary enemy called communism. Now, Nike has a factory there. This is what people need to be hearing," Ndegeocello said glowingly about Davis, a history of consciousness professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz. "Music is getting so cookie cut-out. You know, get whoever is the flavor-of-the-month artist on your record. I wanted to pay homage to the people who inspire me."

Inevitably, Ndegeocello has turned her inspiration into innovation from day one. Her father, jazz saxophonist Jacques Johnson, inspired her musically at an early age. She learned to play bass, guitar, keyboards, and drums on her own, and she would go on to become a sought-after musician on the Go-Go club scene of her native Washington, D.C.

In 1993, she helped usher in the neo-soul movement with her debut album, *Plantation Lullabies*. She went on to earn four Grammy Award nominations the following year, including one for her crossover hit collaboration with John Mellencamp, "Wild Night." 1996's "Peace Beyond Passion" would follow. 1997 brought two more Grammy nominations, one for "Peace Beyond Passion" and another for her collaboration with Chaka Khan on "Never Miss the Water." 1999's critically acclaimed but widely snubbed *Bitter* album also garnered her a California Music Award for Best R&B Album. She has also won four Gay/Lesbian American Music Awards. But for Ndegeocello, awards and accolades are secondary to her journey of spiritual growth and musical expression. She really just wants to make good music.

"Meshell takes her unique album compositions to a whole new level in her live performances. She brings it!" said E. Jason Orr, founder and producer of Funkjazz Kafe, a multicultural and interactive music festival in Atlanta. The event is known in music circles for showcasing underground and commercial urban artists like Ndegeocello whose vibe-filled music resonates with discriminating audiences. Ndegeocello's fan base transcends all cultural barriers, and they appreciate the soul she adds to today's soul-less music. As she tours the United States and Japan this summer, these same devoted audiences will cram into standing-room-only venues to witness her high-energy performances.

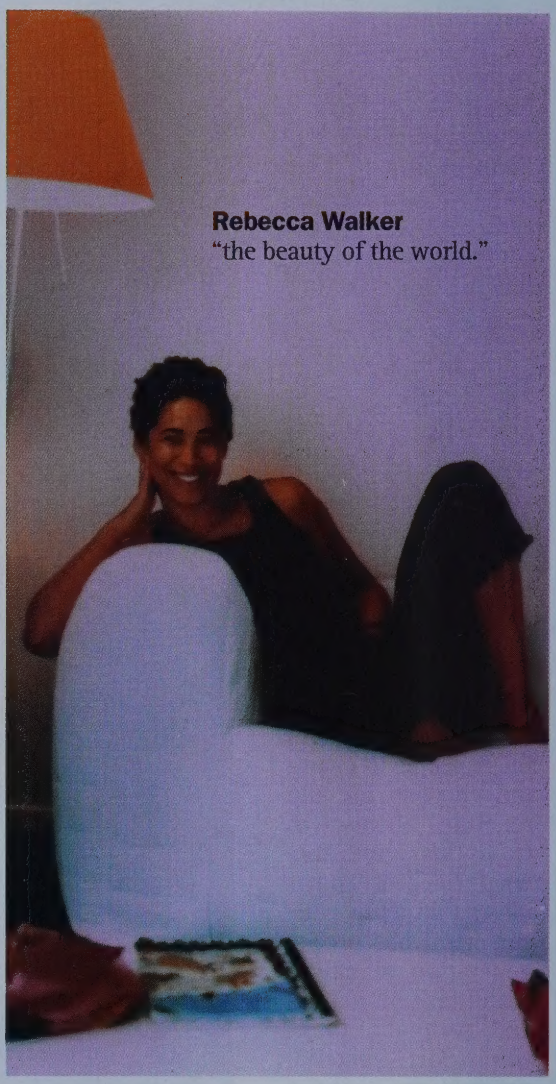
You're my earth. Sweet paradise. There's no place I'd rather be.
–from "Earth"

Ndegeocello dedicates the album's enchanting "Earth" to Rebecca Walker, her partner of six years and the woman she calls "the beauty of the world." Walker is a co-founder of the Third Wave Foundation, the nation's only philanthropic organization devoted to young women's activism and leadership. She's also an author, as is her mom Alice Walker. The couple met at an Ndegeocello show in New York, and after a couple of positive encounters, they were inseparable.

When Ndegeocello and Walker are not busy in their respective careers, they devote their energies to raising Ndegeocello's 13-year-old son, Askia. Ndegeocello becomes emotional when she talks about how blessed she is to have Walker as Askia's "other parent." She feels that love is the key to raising a child in a same-gender-loving household.

"Be a good person, and teach your child to be a good person," Ndegeocello advised. "Make them a whole person without feeling inadequate in the world. Make sure they go to a school where they don't come [home] depressed trying to compete in this system. Just make sure when they come home they know nothing but love."

Ndegeocello makes it clear that raising her son into a man is the foremost thing on her mind. The only challenge is ensuring he avoids the pitfalls she sees her Black brothers succumbing to. "I just hope [my son] doesn't buy into this thug, survival-of-the-fittest mentality," she said. "I don't want him to think [that] as a Black man he has to overexert himself and be this supermacho man. I don't want him to think that being a man means being an athlete or having lots of money. I want his masculinity to be based on how he feels and [that he] feels good about himself, whether he loves a man, a woman, or decides to be a monk."



Rebecca Walker
"the beauty of the world."

I was way down for the revolution until I found out it was contingent on some corporate sponsorship.
--from "God.Fear.Money"

Ndegeocello's journey is constantly bringing her so many new experiences that she's often unable to express her views and observations in a single album. Even before *Cookie* was released, she began work on a new set of material in response to her constantly evolving journey. One of her most life-changing experiences happened on the tragic day of Sept. 11, 2001. She was in New York City that day preparing for a gig that would end up cancelled. From her hotel room window, she watched one of the World Trade Center towers collapse. That was only the beginning.

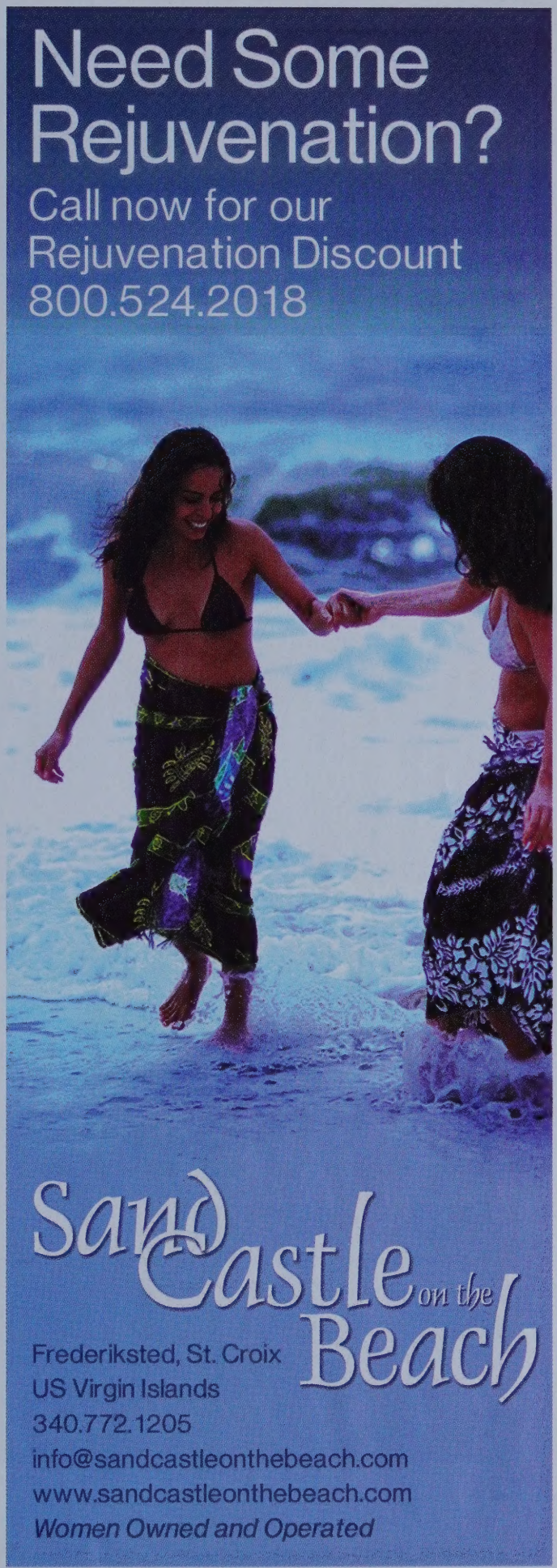
"I saw cab drivers beat up and cussed out," Ndegeocello revealed in disgust, "[and] little rich motherfuckers up in the Bryant Park Hotel calling their daddies. 'Can't you send a helicopter to come and get me?' And you wonder why they're bombing us? This gross sense of wealth and entitlement we have while other people are starving. Divinely, I was meant to be there because I really saw what motivates the world."

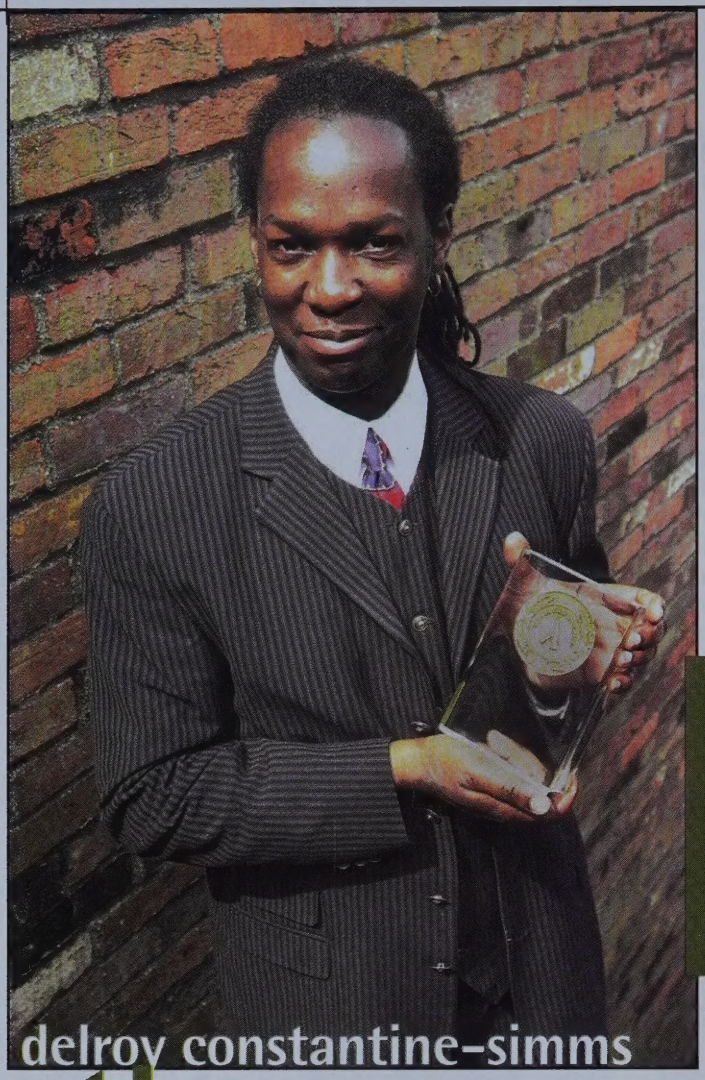
Instead of seeking refuge in her hotel that fateful day, Ndegeocello offered her hotel suite to a stranded woman and her daughter until they could get a way home. She later penned the yet-to-be-released song "Fellow hip" in response to the hatred and religious slurs that have raged since Sept. 11. Ndegeocello also has sought musical inspiration in the music of Bob Marley and spiritual solace in her religious teachings (she calls herself a Judeo-Islamic Christian). She believes "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and she refuses to live her life thinking money or material wealth will get her, or anybody else, out of tragedy and into heaven.

Niggas need to redefine what it means to be free.
--from "Dead Nigga Blvd. Pt. 1"

Ndegeocello does not claim to have all the answers; she's constantly searching for truth on this journey. Still, she acknowledges that her fellow brothers and sisters in the gay and lesbian community have their own set of issues, which impede its progress. "People of color have bought into this white gay male paradigm, and it doesn't necessarily work for us," the iconoclastic musi-

continued on page 89





delroy constantine-simms

the greatest taboo wins lammy

words by Dr. Alaric Blair

Finally, there is a variegated collection of scholarly work that in some ways qualifies the Afrocentric "homosexual" experience within the context of the larger Black community. What's more is that the "mainstream" gay and lesbian literati have recognized this work as best in its class.

Edited by New York-based writer, Delroy Constantine-Simms, the controversial book *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality In Black Communities* won the Lambda Literary Award for best Non Fiction Anthology 2001 at the 14th Annual Lambda Literary Awards for excellence in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender literature held in New York City (May, 2002).

"Without the help, support, and patience of the contributors and Alyson Publications, this book would not have been complete,"

> "I want to give previously unheard voices the opportunity to be heard. As long as there is a book out there which focuses on black gay and lesbian issues my job is done."

Constantine-Simms said in an interview with *Venus*. "As far as I am concerned, the contributors made this book. So for me, my success is down to them."

Constantine-Simms spoke very highly of the contributors and to the quality of work presented by even those who were not included in this publication. He said he used those who were not included as "consultants" throughout the publishing process, and he graciously acknowledges them in pre-literary pages of the book.

Taboo comes at a crucial time in the renaissance of thought surrounding the issue of homosexuality in the Black community, and the controversy surrounding it is manifold. He has been criticized for not having enough [if not any] female perspective included, not using enough of his (native) Black British contemporaries' works, and mostly for making the work a "study" in Black homosexuality rather than a litany of "coming-out-stories and poetry."

He also stated his disappointment at having scant submissions from Black lesbians and tardy submissions from the Black gay British community.

When asked about the far-reaching import of a book of nonfiction that has been criticized as being cognitively dense and "inaccessible," Constantine-Simms said he hopes that *Taboo* will become a part of a Black or African studies curriculum and that students will be able to extrapolate material from it for "empirical and research purposes." He was also satisfied that he'd adopted an academic approach to the book. Had he not, he commented, *Taboo* would have been "dismissed as the disgruntled ranting of the Black gay and lesbian community. I get slightly bored with people in the Black community arguing that the Black books out there are too academic and the language is inaccessible," Constantine-Simms said. "[Some] critics do not realize how academically rigorous the Black community is when it comes to a lot of issues."

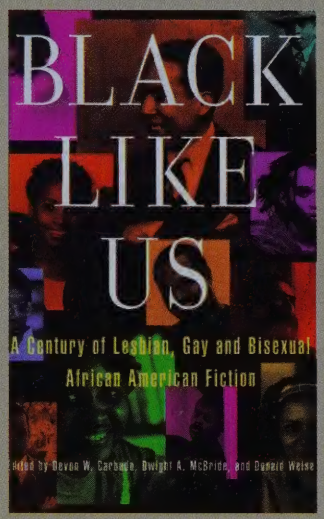
Constantine-Simms cited instances in which arguments and debates about the Bible or religion have always been academic in nature. He was also clear on his objective in supplying the canon with another perspective on Black homosexuality that was radically different from the sparse articles and studies done by mainstream white academics on the same subject. Constantine-Simms has managed to supply us with a great deal more than just a body of academic work against which to juxtapose white "queer studies" paradigms.

Not only does *Taboo* include some of the best in Black gay and lesbian scholarship (written by men and women of color who identify as same-gender-loving), but it also has a great many hetero-normative writers. Constantine-Simms said that he included these submissions from non-gay contributors because the writers were "sympathetic to gay and lesbian rights" issues and their presence would serve as an academic fulcrum upon which to balance the full weight of our community's ability to establish allies in the straight community. "While closed [gay-only] debate is good," Constantine-Simms said, "the debate must also be opened to a wider audience so that the issues affecting the Black gay and lesbian community can be understood."

Currently, Constantine-Simms is working on a second volume of *Taboo*. He promises that the next volume will be less academic in its approach and will include more British writers and Black lesbian contributions. "I want to give previously unheard voices the opportunity to be heard. As long as there is a book out there that focuses on Black gay and lesbian issues, my job is done."

Review by Dr. Alaric Blair

Our Time Has Come

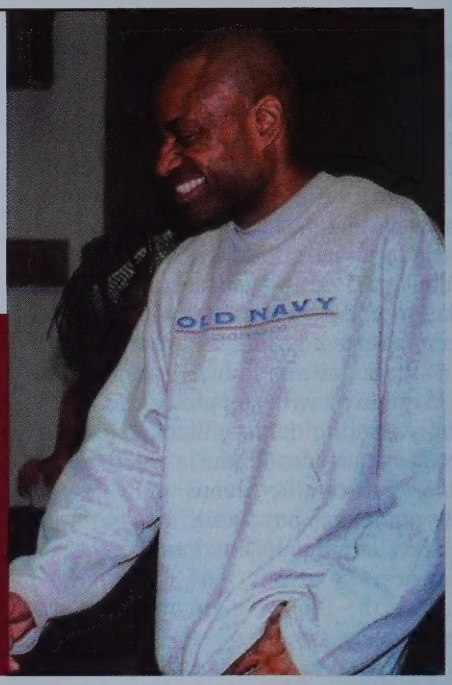


Many of us remember our college English literature classes and lugging around those heavy tomes of canonical literature published by Norton. There was the Norton Anthology of English Literature from this period to that, the Norton Anthology of American Literature, the Norton Anthology of American Poetry, and now there is even a Norton Anthology of African-American Literature (albeit less inclusive as it should be). Now, the African-American LGBT community has its own tome of significant literary contributions. It does what any anthology should do: tell us what important works in every literary epoch we should read to be considered well-read.

Black Like Us (Cleis Press, 2002) is a rather compact volume of African-American "Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual" fiction from the Twentieth Century. Thanks to editors Devon W. Carbado, Dwight A. McBride, and Donald Weise, we now have a bound canon—complete with period divisions. Each era is preceded by an incredibly articulate and erudite introduction and biography of its major contributors.

Eras of writing include: the Harlem Renaissance (1900-1950), the Protest Era (1950-1980), and Coming Out Black, Like Us (1980-2000). Among the authors featured are many that have been read and admired for years and some not-so-known writers whose works warrant immortalization. Writers like Alice Dunbar-Nelson (1875-1935) get "star billing" as the first author cited in the Harlem Renaissance era. Her story Natalie (1898) leads the long procession of griots and authors that appear in this work. The work ends with an excerpt from Marci Blackman's (1969 -) Po Man's Child (1999). What this remarkably well-researched volume does is give our community a "traditional" literary context for our contributions to the general canon of literature—a context for study and analysis. Scholars rejoice its arrival, students applaud its thoroughness, and writers strive to be included in the next volume of this unprecedented work.

james earl hardy



"I think that self-publishing is going to be the key to our survival, literally speaking, as a writing community, because I don't think that things are going to change the way they should change and as soon as they should change for us as far as the corporate publishing outlets are concerned."

spiking the world of hip-hop homosexuals the fifth time around

words by Stanley Bennett Clay

It is small wonder that one of the characters in Spike Lee's film, *Get On The Bus*, is seen reading a copy of James Earl Hardy's *B-Boy Blues*. The synergy of the filmmaker and the novelist is evident in their art and their politics. Actually, their art is their politics. And though both men are of slight physical stature, their voices are big, strong, and unshakable.

James Earl Hardy, like Spike, has achieved iconoclastic stature. Unapologetically Afrocentric and homosexual, he single-handedly created a new literary genre with his *B-Boy Blues* series, a loving chronicle of strong, proud Black men who experience the joy and heartbreak, the ups and downs, and the ins and outs of same-gender love set in and around the world of New York hip-hop.

Love The One You're With is Hardy's fifth B-Boy installment and it's an absolute winner. Flirtatious and sexy, this hilarious and fast-paced read finds our hero, Mitchell "Little Bit" Crawford and his fine-ass hunk Raheim "Pookie" Rivers, now love-deep into their long-term relationship, phone-sexing it to the hilt since Raheim, now a Tyson Beckford-type supermodel, is 3,000 miles away in Hollywood starring in his first film. Goody-two-shoe Mitchell, with a little help from his three musketeers Gene, B.D., and Babyface, is tempted to cheat at every turn. Watching Mitchell battle with his libido is only half the fun, as Hardy's crisp and authentic dialogue, biting humor, heartbreaking drama and unabashed celebration of culture makes this book a genuinely good treat from start to finish.

"There will be one more title," Hardy revealed in our talk at a recent book signing in Oakland, Calif., "and it will bring the characters into the 21st century. That's really all I know right now. It's been seven years since *Eazy-E* [his

fourth book *The Day Eazy-E Died*] ended. A lot has happened. Raheim is knocking on 30, Mitchell is 36, and Junior [Raheim's son] is 13. If, in the sixth book, they're still together, it will be interesting to see what kind of home they have. And it will be interesting to see if Raheim officially comes out of the closet to his family. Just like everybody else, I can't wait to find out what's going to happen myself."

Publishing Pitfalls

Much is happening in Hardy's life. Having been less than happy with back-of-the-bus marketing and promotions at the white gay publishing house, Alyson, where he sold more than a quarter of a million books, he has moved over to Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins.

"You'd think I was the no-hit Supremes," Hardy said about his days at Alyson. "I just needed to go to a [publishing] house that would do right by Pookie, Little Bit, and Little Brotherman [Junior] finally."

Though happy with the move, he still believes that the book industry as a whole marginalizes the black same-gender-loving writers and their audience. "Because of that," he said, "many of us can't get an agent, let alone a publisher, to take us on. You'd think that after the success of E. Lynn Harris and myself that publishers would have at least a half-dozen ELH and JEH clones trying to capitalize on this market out there. But they're still treating us like aberrations. That's probably why so many same-gender-loving writers over the past few years have published their own work."

When the door is closed, you can only bang on it for so long. So I hope that now that I've moved to HarperCollins and with the success of *Love The One You're With*, that it will become clear that we're not going away, and not only do

continued on page 88

A New Spin

Serious readers know the advantage of a revolving bookcase. Levenger Carousels are the ultimate in Lazy Susan libraries. Not only do they hold much in a small space and offer access to all with a gentle spin, but you can stack and rearrange the units as your needs evolve. Put three tall units together for books, or add a medium and a small to a tall unit to hold videos and CDs. The Lazy Susan mechanism locks ingeniously into place with the next unit—no hardware or patience required. Book Carousel ($169), Video Carousel ($159), CD Carousel ($149), Base ($79.95). For more information, visit www.levenger.com.

ty stephens living his fantasy

review by Charlene Cothran

A few weeks ago, I was introduced to R&B artist Ty Stephens at New York City's *Black 2: Broadway* show. I went to catch one of my favorite entertainers, the marvelous Marva Hicks, who did indeed wear me thin with her fantastic performance. But for me, the surprise goodie package was Stephens. Harmoniously disguised as a background singer for most of the evening, he opened the second half of the show with a sizzling solo, "Summer Time." What a talent. Smooth vocals, strong stage décor, and soulfully inspiring dance moves helped Stephens easily convince me—and the rest of his audience—that he is not just another pub singer. Ty Stephens is truly an entertainer.

Naturally, I bought his latest CD *Deeper in Fantasy* right after the show. I popped it into my Mac the next morning and mmm, Stephens and his band, Romantasy, offered 11 tasty, adult-oriented tracks cut with a jazz edge. The mix of R&B, jazz, and stone-cold funk lured my wife in to find out the name of the artist. I immediately had to redirect her when she suggested that she take the CD to work with her. No way.

> "Performing is the 'high.' Nothing is better than connecting with your audience and hearing them sing along with your music or rock their head to your grooves!"

Stephens hails from Philadelphia, and has been on the New York club scene since the early 1980s. He and his band won the B.E.T. Jazz Discovery Award for best vocals in 1999. A consummate performer, Stephens has shared the stage and recorded with such notables as Harry Belafonte, Phyllis Hyman, Gregory Hines, and

Smoky Robinson, to name a few. He has appeared on Broadway in the original companies of *Sophisticated Ladies* and has numerous TV and radio commercials including Mars Bar, AT&T, KMart, and McDonald's. But that's not all. He has co-written, starred in, and choreographed for the off-off-Broadway production of *Shades of Harlem*, and he's currently putting the finishing touches on his play *Happily Ever ...!*

So, why, I wondered, am I not hearing *Deeper in Fantasy* on urban radio rotations here in the states? I already know the answer to that. It's real music.

VENUS: What part of the music business do you enjoy the most, song writing, performing, or recording & touring?

Stephens: I really enjoy writing and performing the most. Writing is often "therapeutic" for me. I enjoy playing with words and meaning, even double entendre. It's how I came up with words like 'romantasy' and 'musichameleon.' It's actually fun. Performing is the 'high.' Nothing is better than connecting with your audience and hearing them sing along with your music or rock their head to your grooves. You see firsthand how your music fares, how it does (or doesn't) hit people, how they relate to what you're trying to put across. I don't enjoy recording as much–yet. I don't think I've found my 'self' in that medium, yet. I feel very self-conscious, and I miss the spontaneity of live performance–the audience and the response. As for touring, we have really done little touring. Our gigs are either regional or international ... very little in between up 'til now.

VENUS: How is the latest CD "Deeper in Fantasy" doing nationally?

Stephens: The CD is doing very well, again, regionally and internationally. Honestly, our sales are nothing to write home about, but we sell, and I've had to do a second pressing of both my CDs, *Deeper in Fantasy* and *Musichameleon.* What's missing from our equation is the wherewithal to do proper marketing, distribution, and promotion. Record companies have huge budgets to do all of that. The world has to be made aware of your product and know where they can find it. We do have a great Web site (www.tystephens.com) and several online retail locations, and the Web has been a great ally, with all the links that lead seekers of good music to our site.

VENUS: You have performed abroad for kings, queens and heads of state?

Stephens: Probably my most memorable was for the late Sally Mugabe, the now-deceased wife of Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe. It was so overwhelming to be on the Motherland to begin with, but then to perform for the First Lady. This was a direct result of having toured with Harry Belafonte for three years. Some of my fondest international memories were due to that gig or the result of it.

VENUS: You seem very committed to your band "Romantasy" in this day and age of "solo acts," how did this evolve?

Stephens: Funny you should make note of that. I am toying with the idea of dropping the band name. The truth is, I perform with mostly the same musicians, although, over time the band has evolved and changed. I always encourage them to step out on their own, so eventually, they move on. But, the music we perform is mostly my originals, and I'm the front man and producer. The focus is on me most of the time, anyway. I wanted the band name because at the time when we began, I was just coming out of Broadway shows. I just didn't want people to 'pigeonhole' me as a dancer first. People have long disconnected that tag, although I'm still proud to call myself a dancer, and most see [hear] me now as a singer-songwriter.

Ty Shephens with Brances McKenzie (c) and vocal director, LaTonya Hall. The three provide backround vocals for Black 2 Broadway shows, (see page 18).

VENUS: Were you formally trained in music or just inspired to write/perform?

Stephens: No, I had no formal training in music. My original direction was fine art. I thought I was going to be a graphic designer. Ha! I was inspired by the radio and records. I 'studied' with Roberta Flack, Stevie Wonder, Chaka Khan, Donny Hathaway, Al Jarreau, James Taylor, Joni Mitchell–those were my teachers, and I thank them in my music (and in person if I ever meet them).

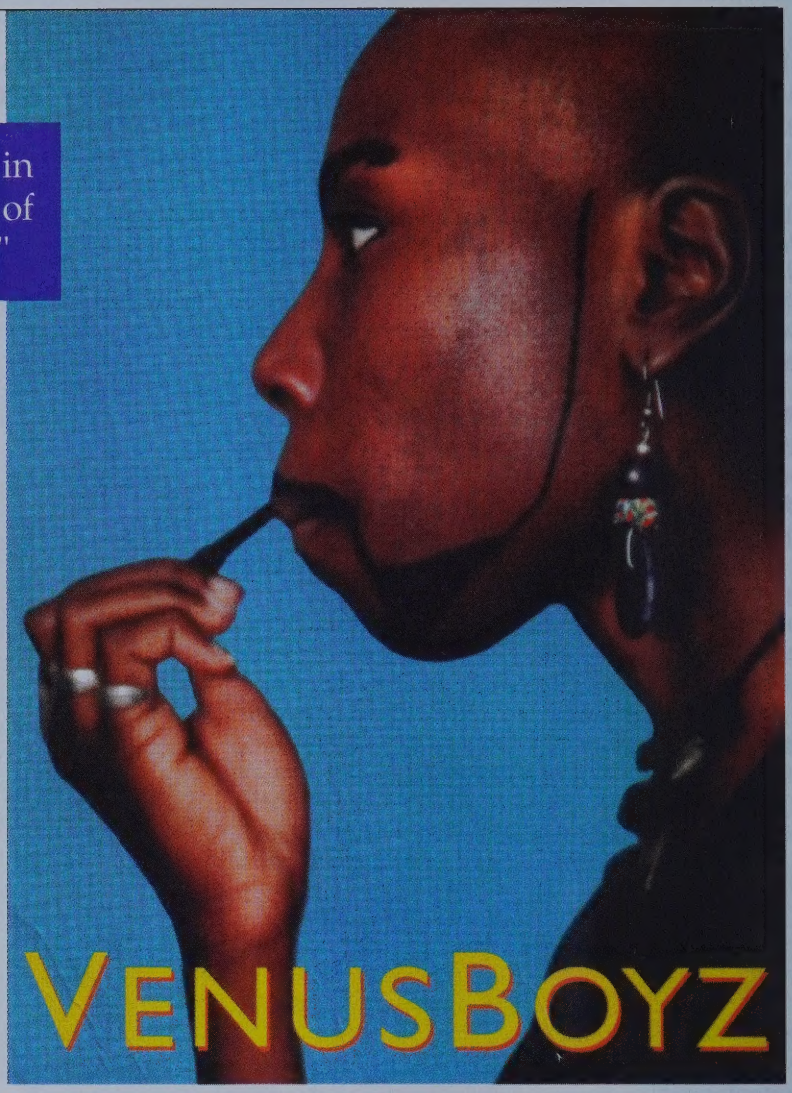
VENUS: How did you become involved with Black 2: Broadway? **[see page 18]**

Stephens: I've known Kevin-Anthony for a few years from his days with the Jenny Burton Experience. Our mutual friend, LaTanya Hall, came to me and my dear friend Branice McKenzie when Kevin, and co-producer Sean Hollingsworth talked about 'solid' supporting vocals and quick learning. I was so flattered and honored to be held in such regard. I feel as strongly about representing *Black 2: Broadway* as I do about representing good music! People need to know we're out here.

"Masculinity in itself is a kind of performance."

drag's best king

words by Kai Wright



Directed by Gabriel Bauer, VENUS BOYZ premiered at gay and lesbian film festivals across the US this summer featuring a star-studded cast including Dred Gerestant, pictured above, Storme Webber, Diane Torr and others. Bauer follows a wide range of subjects finding out about their personalities, the male characters they've created and their perceptions of gender and performances.

RuPaul's incisive proclamation: "You're born naked; everything else is drag," has come to define the '90s drag revival that he set into motion. But we rarely recognize the significance of such moments in real time. So it's OK that most people don't (yet) recognize the day in February 1998 that gender illusionist Dréd (nee, Mildred Gerestant, above) put Black folks on notice that drag kings were about to take pop culture's center stage.

It was, of course, Black history month, and New York City's reigning R&B station, Kiss 98.7, was celebrating with a Superfly look-a-like contest. "Of all things," Dréd sighs when remembering the moment. "So I was like, 'I'm gonna teach 'em a lesson."

Dréd had been in Manhattan's drag scene for a couple of years by that point and had the pimp daddy thing pretty well down. So she entered the contest, as a male rather than as a drag king, and won second place. She waited until the ceremony's close to explain to the crowd that her biology didn't match the gender expression she'd chosen that day.

The response was predictable: First a gasping, pregnant silence, then applause. "It was scary," Dréd laughs, "but I am just so proud of myself for doing that."

It's easy to rattle off more reasons for Dréd to be proud. She's been showcased on MTV and graced the pages of *Vibe*. She performs all over the world for audiences that range from Pride parties to baby showers. And she's currently featured in Gabriel Baur's drag king documentary *Venus Boyz*, which is drawing raves as it sweeps the international film festival circuit.

Her accomplishments are indicative of the king scene's grand emergence.

Women prominently explored drag as far back as the days of Harlem Renaissance jazz pianist Gladys Bentley. But the drag king movement's heyday began in 1996 in the East Village's Club Casanova, where Dréd and "kinging" pioneers such as Mo B. Dick (nee, Mo Fischer–who appeared as a king in John Waters' 1998 film Pecker) captivated the city's lesbian community. The club's popularity quickly drew the attention of New York City's nationally influential media. And the Manhattan kings parlayed that attention into national tours while using the Internet to lead the way in creating a global kinging network.

Today, a Columbus, Ohio, troupe hosts an annual conference that draws thousands of women and new troupes are popping up in every major urban locale. Meanwhile, gender commentator Judith Halberstam's seminal 1998 work *The Drag King Book* is fast becoming required reading for young, hip lesbians.

Dréd is arguably this burgeoning circuit's most popularly recognized performer. But that's not the only reason she stands out. Dréd is also one of few women of color, particularly African Americans, who have taken to the king stage.

"I just don't know," sighs Hades, an African-American king who helped found Washington, D.C.'s troupe, when asked about the paucity of Black faces in the scene. "At first I got a lot of, 'Oh, that's not a Black thing to do.'" The skeptics, mostly gay-identified, couldn't seem to offer Hades (nee, Erica Adegbite) the same license given to men in drag. "You wanna be one of those transsexuals?'" Hades remembers hearing.

It's not that Black folks, gay or straight, are unfamiliar with the concept of gender illusion. The elaborate rituals of the "ball" scene–which was pushed into popular consciousness by the groundbreaking film *Paris is Burning*, but dates all the way back to the lavish affairs of 1920s Harlem–have long provided space for sissy boys and butch dykes to express gender in whatever way they see fit on a given night. And legions of Black men dominate the drag queen scenes of most gay ghettos. So drag is far from alien to Black gay circles.

Meanwhile, RuPaul's crossover appeal laid the foundation for traditionally masculine Black men, from Wesley Snipes to Dennis Rodman, to transgress gender norms in the name of entertainment as well. Rodman's behavior never brought his manhood into question–his "bad boy" moniker still referred as much to his brutish on-court style as his off-court antics. And while these individuals were often dismissed as aberrant, their combined exposure nevertheless made it acceptable for straight Black people to at least be entertained by, if not participate in, drag performance.

Still, while both Dréd and Hades say the ranks of Black kings are growing (the Columbus troupe, H.I.S. Kings, boasts several Black members, for instance), the genre's booming popularity has made few inroads into Black environs. "There's Dréd and there's a few other people," Hades shrugs. "But we cater to a crossover audience. I don't see a lot of Black women rushing to this."

Ultimately, that may simply be a function of the profoundly segregated nature of gay life in America. Kinging has by and large grown out of clubs and parties associated with white lesbians–places few Black women frequent.

Moreover, however welcome gender illusion has become in Black entertainment, drag king performances follow a distinctly different ethic than most other forms. They are in fact less about illusion and more about commentary. RuPaul has never shied away from similarly highlighting the politics inherent in his art, but the political ramifications of most drag queens' performances remain implicit. Not so with drag kings.

"Masculinity in itself is a kind of performance," offers Dréd. Through her interpretations of hip-hop artists such as P. Diddy, she's "trying to send a message about the misogyny and sexism [being performed by] these characters. For me, drag is not just dressing up in the opposite sex."

"At first I got a lot of, 'Oh, that's not a black thing to do.'" The skeptics, mostly gay-identified, couldn't seem to offer Hades (nee, Erica Adegbite) the same license given to men in drag. "You wanna be one of those transsexuals?'" Hades remembers hearing.

In Dréd's most acclaimed piece, she morphs on stage from gender to gender, fluidly moving from the garb of "blacksploitation" characters to Grace Jones-esque androgyny to a bikini clad and unmistakably female form. "I like sharing the transformation," she says. "So much 'mask' is out there. People are afraid to show who they really are."

Her acts typically climax when she reaches into her bikini bottoms and pulls out a shiny red apple,

continued on page 87

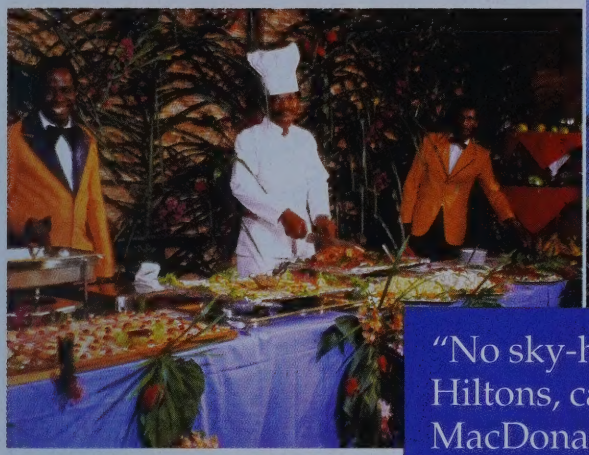
Grenada

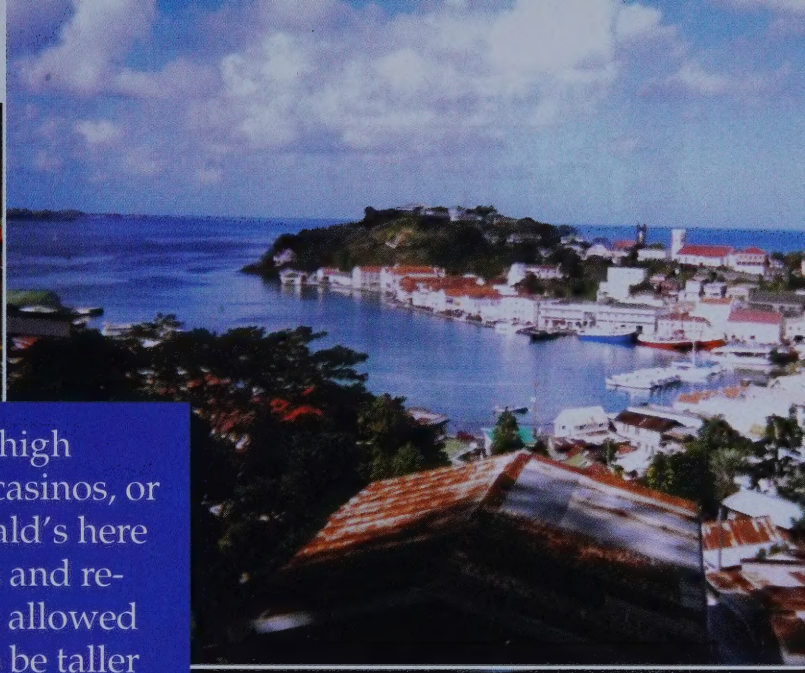
words and images by Stanley Bennet Clay

A handsome young man with cascading dreads sits by the side of the dusty road, smitten, as he spoon-feeds ice cream to his sweetheart, staring into her eyes with hope and promise. The South St. George's Police Station, sparkling white with a sky-blue rooftop, is set in a small field where cows and goats leisurely graze as crisply dressed officers smile and converse on the veranda with locals passing and dropping by to say, "Hi." A young boy, of beautiful onyx, has not removed his sandals; merely turned them to the side, up onto his ankles so that his bare feet can feel the warm pavement that will take him home from the market square.

When Desmond Wells, the proprietor of a local rum shop on Grenada's tiny sister isle, Carriacou, realized I was writing a piece on Grenada, he made only one request. "Do it for the people, not the department of tourism." So simple a request has never been so easily accommodated, for in this unspoiled paradise of sheltered bays, secluded beaches, spectacular waterfalls, lush mountainous forests, and deep crater lakes that remind one of the island's volcanic origins, one is immediately struck by the calm of a people who know the joys of living easy.

But make no mistake. The people of Grenada seem acutely aware of the outside world's attempt to commercialize their paradise, and they resist it with dignity and grace at every turn. No sky-high Hiltons, casinos, or MacDonald's here. And it is refreshing to note that most of the beautiful hotels and resorts, not allowed by law to be taller than the island's tallest palm tree, are designed for beach comfort, romance, and with great respect for the island's gentle aesthetics. The line between tourist and local blur easily here, and it is





There are beautiful places to explore every moment of the day. Check out the Market Place at St. George's Island, above, or take in the hillside view of The Caranage, or enjoy the ocean from your room's private porch at The Grandview Inn.

"No sky-high Hiltons, casinos, or MacDonald's here . . . hotels and resorts, not allowed by law to be taller than the island's tallest palm tree, are designed for beach comfort, romance, and with great respect for the island's gentle aesthetics."

getting there

Air Jamaica from L.A. or New York 800/523-5585; Grenada Board of Tourism:800/927-9554; Grandview Inn reservations 473/444-4984

one of the true pleasures of the area to get lost among the multishaded black locals; deeply tanned, stress-free European settlers; and mellow descendants of East Indian indentured plantation laborers first brought over in 1857. The marketplace in St. George's Parrish, the largest, bustles unselfconsciously under the warm Caribbean sun, and the rich and not-so-rich are indistinguishable in their free-flowing sundresses, neatly pressed school uniforms, and loose-hanging swimwear.

The breathtaking physical beauty of Grenada is matched by a climate gentler than most islands in the Caribbean. Only 12 miles north of the equator, Grenada is rarely touched by storms or hurricanes. Hurricane Janet, which occurred in 1955, was the island's last encounter with devastating weather.

Independent from Great Britain since 1974, 85 percent of the nearly 100,000 population are descendants of African slaves used to cultivate the island's rich tobacco, sugar, cotton, coffee, and cocoa crops. Grenada is second only to Indonesia as the world's largest producer of nutmeg, accounting for 14 percent of annual export revenues and earning the island nation the moniker "Spice of the Caribbean."

Despite a turbulent history that began with a bitter resistance to French occupation in 1650, which resulted in the last 40 native Caribs leaping to their death off the cliff at Sauteurs on the north coast rather than surrender, and includes America's infamous military invasion in 1983, Grenada and her people bare few scars, little bitterness, and a true awareness of the good life they lead. And one can see why. Off pristine beaches upon which crystal blue-green waters gently cozy up can be found some of the best snorkeling in the world, while sailing and deep-sea diving are alluring enough here to seduce even the most aquaphobic.

The Caranage, surrounded by lush green hills dotted with old-world storybook homes, centuries-old church cathedrals, and even a 300-year-old fort, has to be one of the most beautiful harbors in the Caribbean. Along the waterfront are moored schooners and a steel band that serenades fishermen pulling into port with the daily catches.

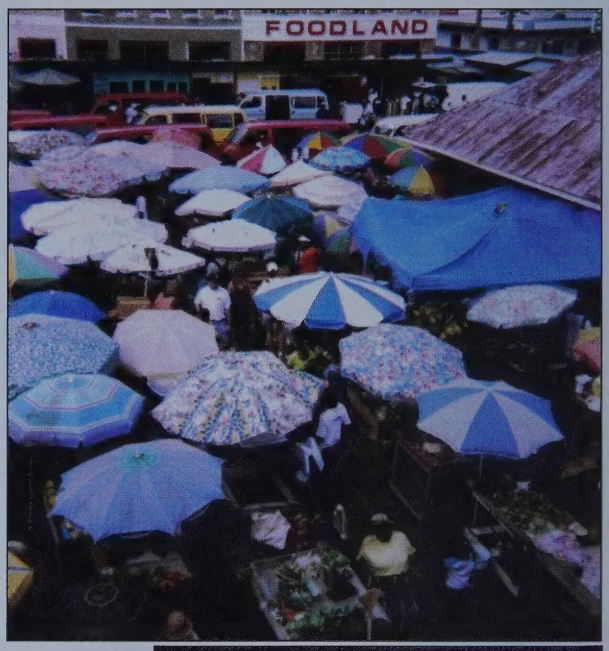
I stayed at the Grand View Inn, a romantic and atmospheric place that truly lives up to its name. Set high on a hill in the Morne Rouge section of the island, many of Grand View's 55 units boast huge colonial-style balconies that overlook the famous Grand Anse Beach on one side and the Morne Rouge Bay on the

FINAL DESTINATION

Grenada

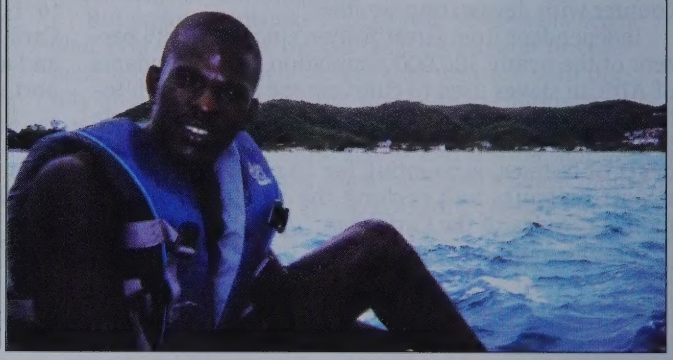
other. I stayed in room 40 and spent much time out on the balcony mesmerized and overwhelmed by the vistas laid out before me. I also kept the sliding glass door the led out to the balcony open all night so that the gentle tropical breeze and the sound of the ocean would put the final touches on a most restful sleep. Like many of the inns and hotels here, the Grand View is owned by a friendly husband-and-wife couple who attend to most of the operations, assuring that guest are given that personal touch. Tropical gardens abound throughout the 2 acres of grounds, and at their poolside bar, the management hosts a Rum Punch happy hour. Rates here, like most of the beautifully appointed hotels and inns are ridiculously inexpensive, ranging from $60 (U.S.) to $95 (U.S.) per night. And with the U.S. dollar (during the time of my visit) equal to approximately 2.67 local EC dollars, the already inexpensive luxury was made even that more alluring.

After six fabulous days it was hard to leave, and upon returning to Los Angeles it took me a while to wind back up. So for that chance to spend some quality time with that significant other far away from the urban grind, for the writer or artist seeking meditative space that inspires creativity, or for an inexpensive vacation in unspoiled beauty, check out Grenada before the developers do. It is truly paradise found.



Grenada is known as the "Spice of the Caribbean" as the chef's tasty buffet suggests. Laura, right, a worker at The Coffee Plantation; below, Grenadian police cadets in training.

My beautiful guide, Hirugh, left, at the Hilltop Spice Plantation. Below, Sean took me sailing each morning.



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Bridge Over Troubled Waters

words by Dorinda Henry

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has struck again. Atlanta is the site of the organization's latest debacle. And once again, the HRC has struck a flat note in it's less than stellar, dare I say, lackadaisical effort of community organizing regarding the African-American lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. Curiously, HRC organizers of the Gospel Soul event had hoped that "the event would help bridge the divide between black gay Atlantans and mainstream African-American churches." Why on earth would the HRC think that such an event would bridge the gap between black gay Atlantans and mainstream African-American churches, when it has failed to bridge the gap between the HRC and Black gays period—whether they are located in Atlanta, Washington, D.C. (HRC's home base), or any city, USA?

The HRC's expectation of the event was unreasonable based on one simple premise: You don't invite someone to dinner—whom you have no prior association, engagement or involvement with—and expect them to attend simply because you invited them. For what purpose should they (African-American churches) attend? Judging by the April 5, 2002, *Southern Voice* article, "All God's Children?" Gospel concert shows the divide between Black gays and mainstream African-American churches in Atlanta; many of the invitees seemed to be unaware of the HRC as an organization or the local organizers for that matter. It is nothing more than racial arrogance on the part of the HRC to think that because it has managed to solidify its importance in the struggle for lesbian and gay rights, that it has received from that accomplishment, omniscient status. Thereby empowering the organization with an all encompassing "how-to-guide" in bridging gaps between one Black community to another, same-gender-loving or otherwise.

I, and hopefully many others will ask the all-important questions: What other conversations, meetings, outreach, etc., took place between the local organizers and the leaders of the invited African-American churches prior to the mailing of the invitations for the Gospel Soul event? What research was done on the list of invitees to suggest that these were churches that might entertain the possibility of attending such an event? If no research was done, what was the determining factor for one church to receive an invitation to the event vs. another? Who made the decision as to what churches were invited—local organizers or the HRC? Where did this list of churches come from? Why weren't mainstream African-American churches with a significant percentage of LGBT congregants invited to participate? These are not rhetorical questions for me and I hope they are not for others. They are appropriate and legitimate questions. I honestly wanted to believe that the goals, the intent, and the motivation behind the Gospel Soul event were pure and void of any attempt to call forth select African-American churches in an effort to hold them up for public ridicule and scorn. However, I attended the event and my fears were soon realized with the parade of HRC organizers standing before their "bully pulpit" pontificating about their minority and people of color outreach efforts.

Expressed disappointment by local organizers in the lack of participation and support from mainstream African-American churches is warranted. Nevertheless, local organizers must shoulder a brunt of the responsibility for the event's questionable "success." "We have an opportunity to be like Moses with this issue—we have to cross these troubled waters between gays and the church and bring the others over," stated one of the local organizers of the Gospel Soul event. Drawing on the Exodus narrative of the Bible was impressive and quite clever, but it will take more than clever quotes and sound bites to organize around this issue. To begin with, we must stop waiting for white organizations to come into our communities and tell us how to organize amongst our own. We have got to stop whoring ourselves out seeking self-aggrandizement, conditional financial funding and support from white organizations, while our leadership capabilities are consistently exploited and disregarded until times of convenience.

It is time that we, African-American same-gender-loving people, put our differences aside, shelve our propensity toward cliques, tear down the walls of singular thinking, and build a temple of pluralistic cohesiveness. To do this, I propose a meeting of the minds. In Atlanta, we can begin with the local organizers of Gospel Soul stepping out from dark shadows, authority, and pseudo outreach efforts of the HRC and the Georgia Equality Project and be the contemporary Joshua's of the Christian Bible and blow their proverbial horn. We, African-American same-gender-loving people, need to come together. Blow your horn! Call the congregation together so that we may sit down, break bread, and reason among each other. I'is time to set our own agenda, locally and nationally. It's time to chart our own course. We are the children of a tenacious lot. We are no strangers to wading/waiting, walking, running or bridging troubled waters.

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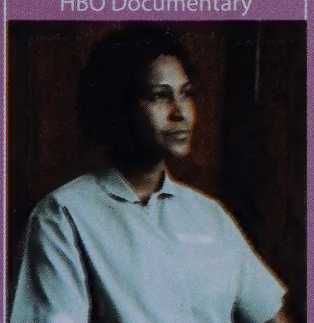

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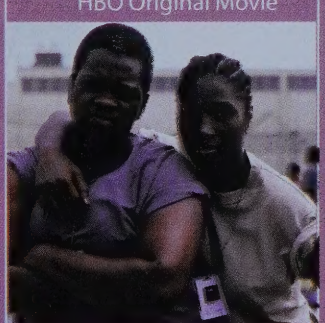

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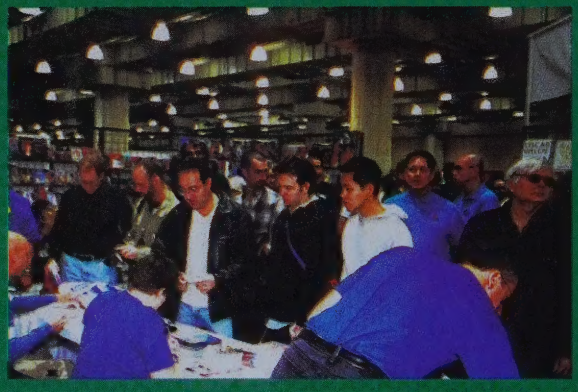

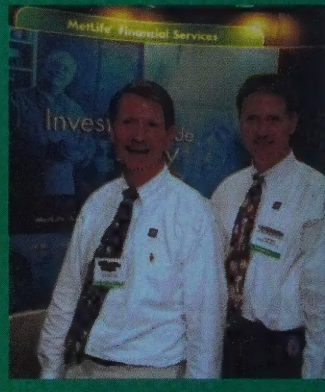

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GENRE

Drag's Best King
continued from page 79

from which she then takes a decidedly sexual bite. "Every time I bite that apple," she explains with a devilish laugh, "I reclaim my power as a woman."

Hades' act is similarly forthright about its politics. When he started out (in character, Hades identifies as a male rather than as a woman doing drag), he tried to avoid gender politics by casting himself as a softy.

"I said, OK, me working in a women's center, I don't want to do any songs that are misogynistic," Hades remembers. "So I would stay away from songs that would bash women. I would joke and say I was more of the whiney guy. The guy who just got kicked to the curb. The guy who really liked the woman but had a hard time saying so."

After establishing himself, he decided he wanted to have more fun with the act—to cash in on hip-hop and R&B's big pimpin' craze. So Hades started doing artists like Sysqo, but added hypersexualized male backup dancers as stand-ins for the rap video "booty girls."

"That five minutes onstage," he explains, "or three hours' prep time, allows me to explore that male side and how it would be—to have fun being a male. There's so many things that men can do that women can't, and you get to notice all of that when you're in drag."

Dréd is working on another character that will comment on gender dynamics within Haitian communities. A first-generation Haitian immigrant, she's struggled to find common ground with her father on her fluid gender identity. "He loves me," she sighs. "He just doesn't understand." Dréd plans to incorporate their troubles into her repertoire.

That's if she finds time in between touring and lecturing on her road to becoming the next RuPaul. She and Hades are both confident kinging is still on the incline, and that more women of color will ultimately join. King troupes are militantly egalitarian, making space on the same stage for both stars and novices. This, as much as anything, has helped fuel the genre's growth. "So African- American women will start seeing this and seeing themselves in it," Hades predicts. "That's all it takes. People saying, 'I can get up there and do that.'"

To find out when and where Dréd will be performing, or to contact her, visit her Web site at www.dredking.com.

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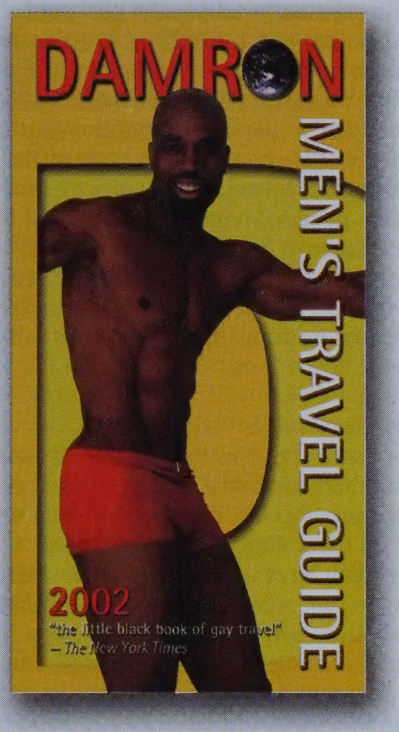

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continued from page 75

our stories have value and there's a market out there for our work, but there are people who are not Black and/or [same-gender-loving] who read our work and support us."

Though signed with one of the largest publishing houses in the industry, Hardy definitely sees himself eventually taking the self-publishing plunge. "I think that self-publishing is going to be the key to our survival, literally speaking, as a writing community, because I don't think that things are going to change the way they should change and as soon as they should change for us as far as the corporate publishing outlets are concerned. I mean, I applaud [Black same-gender-loving self-publishers] like Rick Rollins and Lorenzo Robinson [Ishai Books], Lisa Moore [Red Bone Press], Randy Boyd [West Beach Books], and Qevin Oji [Grapevine Press]. So we have the models. It's just up to us to continue our self-publishing efforts."

The Personal Is Political

He further believes that community support is critical, that there should be Black gay book clubs throughout the country, and that literary events should be held at all Black Gay Pride celebrations.

You have to ask yourself, how much are you doing to support, not only Hardy and Harris, but your local authors who publish their own works and have book readings at bars and clubs? The same way you would round up all your friends to go to the club that night, why can't you round up all your friends to go to the club during the day for a book signing? We have to put our politics to work and not have it just be platitudes.

"Too often I think it's too easy for people to be armchair activists and not really put their politics where their mouths are. We may not like it, but who we are is very political, this is very political, what we create is very political. If we don't support, nurture, and affirm each other in our endeavors, who's going to do it?"

Bringing Characters To Life

Very much the hands-on activist himself, Hardy is fiercely protective of the characters he's created; characters renown for being very clear about who they are and the spaces and places they occupy. Like Hardy, his characters feel no need to justify or seek out anybody's acceptance for who they are. And though he welcomes the idea of seeing his hip-hop homosexuals immortalized on celluloid, it's only going to happen "when someone steps to me correctly," he said, "and wants to do *B-Boy Blues*, not *B-Boy Blues Lite* or *B-Boy Blues White*.

"And also, I would want to see it turned into a series because now there are five books—there will be six—and they span at least a decade in the lives of these characters. If there was just one *B-Boy Blues* movie, it would be cheating the audience that has stuck by these characters all these years. The full story deserves to be played out."

Although he thinks an unknown should play the role of Raheim, he could see the role of the hip intellectual, Mitchell, played by someone like Hill Harper or Lorenz Tate. And similar to E. Lynn Harris' cinematic demands, Hardy is adamant about who would direct.

"I would want a [same-gender-loving] man or woman at the helm because I do believe that there is a particular sensibility—oftentimes it's passed off as sensitivity. No, it's a sensibility—that a director of a particular stripe has to the material that someone who does not look and/or love like you and me would not have. And it's important for that to be there so that I'm not in the position where I'm constantly trying to explain or, worse, fight for particular things to be in that should unquestionably be seen on the screen."

So does that also exclude his friend and colleague Spike Lee? "Spike has said it himself. He doesn't think that he would be the most qualified person to do it because he knows, like many heterosexuals, next to nothing—maybe even less than nothing—about our lives. To direct a film version and convey certain ideas and get certain cultural things right, I think, you would have to be both Black and [same-gender-loving]. But that doesn't mean Spike couldn't executive produce."

Just For The Record ...

So as James Earl Hardy continues his veracious hip-hop saga of Black same-gender love, this writer can't help but ponder Hardy's aim; what Hardy is championing most. In typical James Earl Hardy style, he sets this writer straight.

"For me, it's not even a question of being Black first or same-gender-loving first because both are very integral parts of who I am. And I don't think that I have to discuss myself in halves at all, particularly to white folks and heterosexual folks, because, naturally, those are the people that want you to prioritize. That's just nonsensical and serves no purpose but to place them in a position where they feel they know where your real allegiances lie, when my allegiances lie within myself, not with you, not with any so-called collective called the 'Black community' or the 'gay community.' We belong to many different communities, given the particular spaces we occupy in life. None of those spaces should be more important than the others. You should love all of who you are, for who you are, without feeling the pressure to have one on hold. I've never felt that pressure. I've always said that you may have a problem with who I am being Black and/or same-gender-loving, but that's your problem. Don't make your problem my problem because then we'll have a problem."

N'degeocello
continued from page 71

cian commented. She balks at the white gay culture institutions of bookstores and backrooms because they fail to address the innate communal needs of Black people. Individuality cannot thrive without love and compassion.

"I am not like one of the Birkenstock lesbians who [believe] 'We don't need no men around.' We, as a community, can't afford that prejudice. And I'm just becoming more and more aware of it," said Ndegeocello.

Despite her 5-foot 1-inch size, Ndegeocello has the voice of a titan, which speaks to and for her gay and lesbian peers. It is no surprise that many gays and lesbians consider her an icon—though not like other icons who are deified simply for their ability to use their talents to inspire and touch people's emotions. Sure, she's the funkdafied diva who drops bombs of knowledge and feeds the souls of all her fans. But, gays and lesbians also lift her up because she openly embraces her sexuality without shame. Ndegeocello humbly appreciates the informal honor, but she resists the notion of herself as a "gay poster child."

"I'm not into some discriminating idea of myself where all I am is that I'm gay," Ndegeocello asserted. "I wanna be like [gay civil rights activist] Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin. I wanna be an incredible artist first. Who do I love? I wanna love everybody—anybody who's got love for me."

In The MeanTime
continued from page 46

type of steady and consistent growth that is often stifled by the political binds of grants and corporate sponsorship. In The Meantime is big on inclusion: inclusion of men, inclusion of ideas, inclusion of solutions.

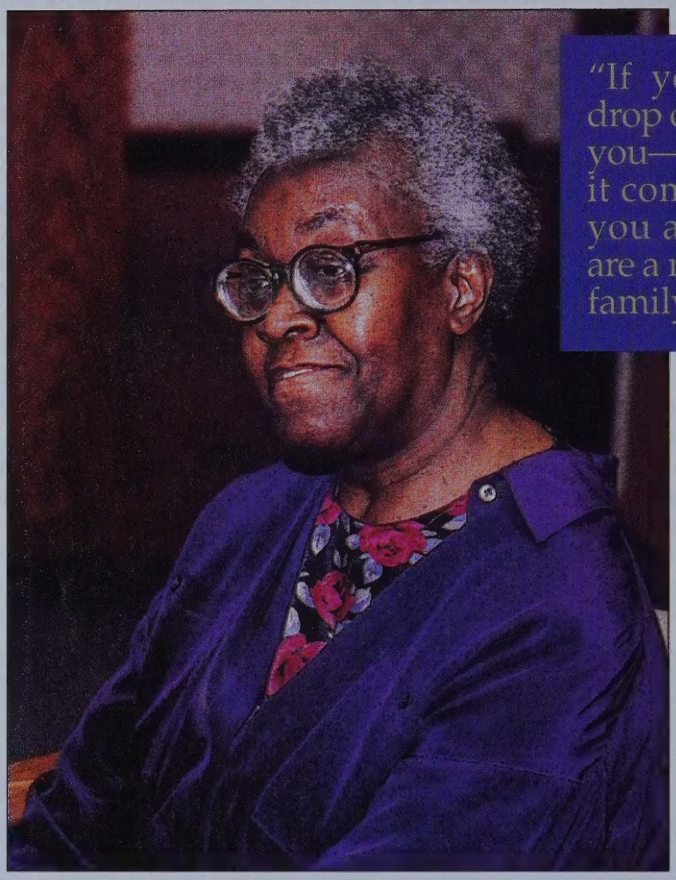
Since 1999, In The Meantime has touched the lives of several thousand men and women via social, civic, and charitable events. Though the focus for the group is primarily geared to elevate the life patterns of same-gender-loving black men, its fundamental respect for inclusion has garnered support in the development of cross-cultural events, in an effort to bridge the paths of various groups of different ethnic and sexual orientations.

This has been a busy year for this very progressive group of men from all walks of the African spectrum, yet the notion of pausing is not an option. Hence, August will provide the backdrop for their Annual People of Color Picnic. September will set the stage for the Annual Umoja Men's Retreat, and December will usher in the In The Meantime Third Anniversary Celebration.

"Our future is bright and full of awesome possibilities. We continue to push forward as we embrace who we are as men, and as we express more of what we are as a people: brilliant and tenacious." For more information, please call 323/664-4049.

Gwendolyn Brooks 1917 - 2000

words by Lucianna Lopez
image by Brent Jones



"If you have one drop of Blackness in you—yes, of course it comes out red—you are mine. You are a member of my family."

Poet Gwendolyn Brooks changed the landscape of American poetry. Although she was born in Topeka, Kan., in 1917, her family moved to Chicago after her birth. The city influenced her deeply, with characters from the city's Black neighborhoods populating her work and giving rise to distinctly urban jazz-inflected lines.

When Brooks' schoolteacher mother, Keziah Wims Brooks, noticed Brooks writing poetry at the age of 7, she encouraged her daughter's literary pursuits, even exempting Brooks from chores to create more writing time. Brooks' first published poem "Eventide," appeared in *American Childhood Magazine* in 1930. Four years later, Brooks had a weekly poetry column in *The Chicago Defender.*

After high school, Brooks attended Wilson Junior College. She continued publishing after graduation in 1936 and won the Midwestern Writers Conference Poetry Award in 1943. Two years later she published her first book, the critically lauded *A Street in Bronzeville.*

Her second poetry collection, 1949's *Annie Allen*, garnered even more acclaim, winning Brooks the first Pulitzer Prize awarded to a Black writer in 1950. The work followed a narrative arc, describing the life of a Black woman through a poverty- and discrimination-marred childhood to adulthood.

In 1967 Brooks attended the Fisk University Second Black Writers' Conference, marking the start of an increased involvement in the Black Arts movement. Her new political consciousness led her to speak out on the idea of a Black aesthetic. Brooks also shifted her work away from large publishing houses and to Black-owned publishers.

The subsequent 1968 collection *In the Mecca* saw Brooks turn to free verse and incorporate more vernacular, making the book accessible to a wider audience. The book also contained pieces dedicated to Medgar Evers and Malcolm X.

Following collections were influenced by the social transformations of the '60s. The optimism of revolution and Black power made appearances in her work the early '70s, but infighting among civil rights groups later changed the tone of Brooks' work to one of disenchantment.

An attendee of Chicago poetry slams, Brooks received a lifetime achievement award from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1989. She received the federal government's highest award for work in the humanities when she was named the 1994 Jefferson Lecturer by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

By the time of her death of cancer on Dec. 3, 2000, Brooks had published more than 20 books of poetry, as well as a novel and an autobiography. She died surrounded by friends and family, reading aloud to her.

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Love Match

I read your article on Me'Shell Ndegeocello[Vol. 8 No. 3 2002]. She speaks about her relationship with Rebecca Walker. They've been together for a long time and seem to share a soulmate-oriented relationship. I do a lot of research on astrological compatibility between couples. Me'Shell and I share the same zodiac sign (Virgo). I'm very curious to know what Rebecca's is. I've searched every biography for Rebecca Walker published online but have unfortunately been unsuccessful in finding that information on my own. Outside of 1969 and Jackson, Miss., an actual birthdate is never indicated.

I was wondering if you can provide me with the zodiac sign or birthdate of Rebecca Walker. Although I'm sure this request isn't one of your most important ones, it is to me. As an African-American bisexual female Virgo, their love match hits close to home. Thanks in advance for your help. Keep up the good work on the magazine.

Shaunda Brunston
Via the Internet

Practical Advice

I enjoyed your cover article relating to Ms. Me'Shell. I thought once again you guys did an excellent job in capturing the heart and soul of the individual you interview. I have read several articles relating to Me'Shell, and what particularly interested me about this article is the "rawness" and "realness" that comes across about her and her life's journey. I am sure all who read her story will be enlightened and inspired.

Tiye Lasley,
Executive Director
AALU African American Lesbians United

write a letter, get a book

If your letter to the editor is chosen and published here, you'll receive a free book from www.CleisPress.com! Send letters with your name, address, and daytime phone number to: editor@venusmagazine.com or via fax to 914/376-4441, or write Letters, c/o Venus Magazine, P. O. Box 4711, Hamilton, NJ 08610. Letters chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity. All letters submitted become the property of Venus Magazine and may be used in any media.

Jennifer Holliday

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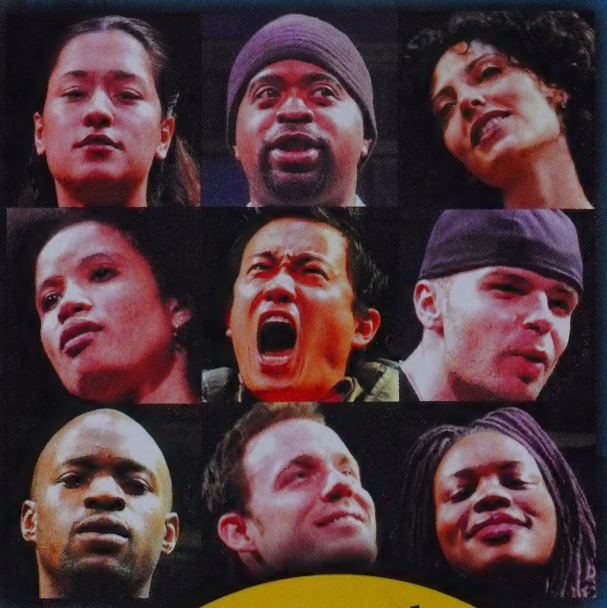
THE LIFE OF THE PARTY
JUST SHOWED UP.



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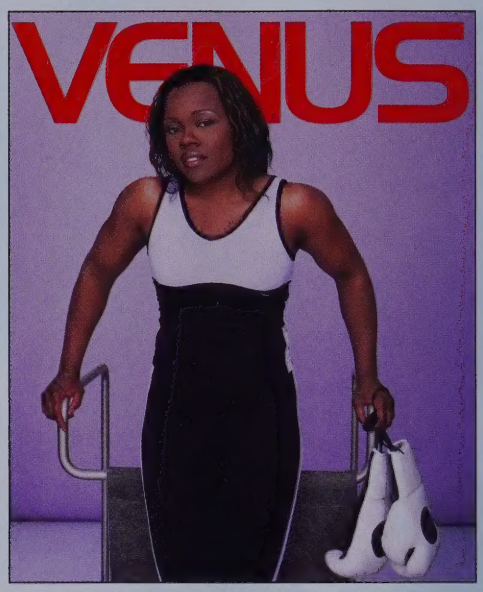

Professional Suicide

In answer to Phil Petrie's question: "Is There A New World Coming for Gay Athletes in Team Sports?" [Vol. 8 No. 2, 2002]

Yes. And that world will be led by athletes with the backbone to debunk the myth that being openly gay is professional suicide. That world will be led by athletes whose sexuality won't matter because they do what team owners and advertisers expect them to do: win.

And if they don't get the endorsements that others get, somehow they'll manage to live the way they did before they turned pro and the way the rest of us do: without them.

Steve Langley
Washington, DC

My Surprise

I just want to thank you again for your support and encouragement of my work as an artist. I have received many reposes due to the feature article in *Venus*. To my surprise many of the straight black-folks at my teaching job read *Venus* Magazine and were talking about the recent issue and the article on Me'Shell Ndegeocello.

I know your work is important to many people and is crossing borders that need crossing.

Zenzele Browne
InTheLightArts.com
New York City, NY

WHAT KALETRA HAS TO OFFER MAY SURPRISE YOU

ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT

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(lopinavir/ritonavir)

FOR THE TREATMENT OF HIV

KALETRA is indicated for the treatment of HIV infection in combination with other antiretroviral agents in patients 6 months of age or older. KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing of HIV to others.

Safety Information

KALETRA should not be taken if you have had an allergic reaction to KALETRA or any of its ingredients.

KALETRA must not be taken with certain drugs due to the potential for serious and/or life-threatening side effects. Discuss all medicines, including those without a prescription and herbal preparations, you are taking or plan to take with your doctor or pharmacist.

Pancreatitis and liver problems, which may cause death, have been reported in patients receiving KALETRA. Tell your doctor if you have or have had liver disease such as hepatitis. Your doctor may want to monitor your liver function. In patients taking protease inhibitors, increased bleeding (in patients with hemophilia) and diabetes/high blood sugar have occurred. Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients receiving antiretroviral therapy. Some patients receiving KALETRA have had large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.

The most commonly reported side effects of moderate or severe intensity are: abnormal bowel movements, diarrhea, feeling weak or tired, headache, and nausea. Children most often reported diarrhea, rash, taste aversion, and vomiting.

KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol.

Please see adjacent page for Patient Information.

www.kaletra.com

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KALETRA™
(lopinavir/ritonavir) capsules
(lopinavir/ritonavir) oral solution

ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with KALETRA. Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

Patient Information

KALETRA™
(kuh-LEE-tra)

Generic Name: lopinavir/ritonavir
(lop-IN-uh-veer/rit-ON-uh-veer)

Read this leaflet carefully before you start taking KALETRA. Also, read it each time you get your KALETRA prescription refilled, in case something has changed. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor when you start this medicine and at check ups. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about KALETRA.

What is KALETRA and how does it work?

KALETRA is a combination of two medicines. They are lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is a type of medicine called an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor. KALETRA is always used in combination with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. KALETRA is for adults and for children age 6 months and older.

HIV infection destroys CD4 (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

KALETRA blocks HIV protease, a chemical which is needed for HIV to multiply. KALETRA reduces the amount of HIV in your blood and increases the number of T cells. Reducing the amount of HIV in the blood reduces the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

Does KALETRA cure HIV or AIDS?
KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Does KALETRA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

KALETRA does not reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take KALETRA?

- You should stay under a doctor's care when taking KALETRA. Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- You must take KALETRA every day exactly as your doctor prescribed it. The dose of KALETRA may be different for you than for other patients. Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.
- Dosing in adults (including children 12 years of age and older): The usual dose for adults is 3 capsules (400/100 mg) or 5.0 mL of the oral solution twice a day (morning and night), in combination with other anti-HIV medicines.
- Dosing in children from 6 months to 12 years of age: Children from 6 months to 12 years of age can also take KALETRA. The child's doctor will decide the right dose based on the child's weight.
- Take KALETRA with food to help it work better.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking KALETRA without first talking with your doctor.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- Be sure to set up a schedule and follow it carefully.
- Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give KALETRA to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

What should I do if I miss a dose of KALETRA?

It is important that you do not miss any doses. If you miss a dose of KALETRA, take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

What happens if I take too much KALETRA?

If you suspect that you took more than the prescribed dose of this medicine, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

As with all prescription medicines, KALETRA should be kept out of the reach of young children. KALETRA liquid contains a large amount of alcohol. If a toddler or young child accidentally drinks more than the recommended dose of KALETRA, it could make him/her sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately if this happens.

Who should not take KALETRA?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether KALETRA is right for you.

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. These could cause serious side effects that could cause death. Before you take KALETRA, you must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or are planning to take. These include other prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal supplements.

For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please read the section titled "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir or lopinavir.

Can I take KALETRA with other medications?*

KALETRA may interact with other medicines, including those you take without a prescription. You must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or planning to take before you take KALETRA.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA:

- Do not take the following medicines with KALETRA because they can cause serious problems or death if taken with KALETRA.
  - Dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine and methylergonovine such as Cafergot®, Migranal®, D.H.E. 45®, Ergotrate Maleate, Methergine, and others
  - Halcion® (triazolam)
  - Hismanal® (astemizole)
  - Orap® (pimozide)
  - Propulsid® (cisapride)
  - Rythmol® (propafenone)
  - Seldane® (terfenadine)
  - Tambocor™ (flecainide)
  - Versed® (midazolam)
- Do not take KALETRA with rifampin, also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®. Rifampin may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- Do not take KALETRA with St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease KALETRA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to KALETRA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV medicines.
- Do not take KALETRA with the cholesterol-lowering medicines Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible serious reactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between KALETRA and Lipitor® (atorvastatin); talk to your doctor before you take any of these cholesterol-reducing medicines with KALETRA.

Medicines that require dosage adjustments:

It is possible that your doctor may need to increase or decrease the dose of other medicines when you are also taking KALETRA. Remember to tell your doctor all medicines you are taking or plan to take.

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with KALETRA, talk to your doctor about problems these two medicines can cause when taken together. You may get increased side effects of VIAGRA, such as low blood pressure, vision changes, and penis erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

- If you are taking oral contraceptives ("the pill") to prevent pregnancy, you should use an additional or different type of contraception since KALETRA may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.
- Efavirenz (Sustiva™) or nevirapine (Viramune®) may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood. Your doctor may increase your dose of KALETRA if you are also taking efavirenz or nevirapine.
- If you are taking Mycobutin® (rifabutin), your doctor will lower the dose of Mycobutin.
- **A change in therapy should be considered if you are taking KALETRA with:**
  Phenobarbital
  Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)
  Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)
  These medicines may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- **Other Special Considerations:**
  KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take metronidazole or disulfiram. Severe nausea and vomiting can occur.
- **If you are taking both didanosine (Videx®) and KALETRA:**
  Didanosine (Videx®) should be taken one hour before or two hours after KALETRA.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

- This list of side effects is **not** complete. If you have questions about side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You should report any new or continuing symptoms to your doctor right away. Your doctor may be able to help you manage these side effects.
- The most commonly reported side effects of moderate severity that are thought to be drug related are: abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache, and nausea. Children taking KALETRA may sometimes get a skin rash.
- Blood tests in patients taking KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Liver problems including death have occurred in patients taking KALETRA. In studies, it is unclear if KALETRA caused these liver problems because some patients had other illnesses or were taking other medicines.
- Some patients taking KALETRA can develop serious problems with their pancreas (pancreatitis), which may cause death. You have a higher chance of having pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.
- Some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.
- Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) occur in patients taking protease inhibitors such as KALETRA. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients need changes in their diabetes medicine. Others needed new diabetes medicine.
- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.
- Some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors.
- There have been other side effects in patients taking KALETRA. However, these side effects may have been due to other medicines that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Some of these side effects can be serious.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

- *If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant:* The effects of KALETRA on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known.
- *If you are breast-feeding:* Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that HIV can be transmitted through breast-feeding.
- *If you have liver problems:* If you have liver problems or are infected with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, you should tell your doctor before taking KALETRA.
- *If you have diabetes:* Some people taking protease inhibitors develop new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you have diabetes or an increase in thirst or frequent urination.
- *If you have hemophilia:* Patients taking KALETRA may have increased bleeding.

How do I store KALETRA?

- Keep KALETRA and all other medicines out of the reach of children.
- Refrigerated KALETRA capsules and oral solution remain stable until the expiration date printed on the label. If stored at room temperature up to 77°F (25°C), KALETRA capsules and oral solution should be used within 2 months.
- Avoid exposure to excessive heat.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

General advice about prescription medicines:

Talk to your doctor or other health care provider if you have any questions about this medicine or your condition. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information Leaflet. If you have any concerns about this medicine, ask your doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you information about this medicine that was written for health care professionals. Do not use this medicine for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not share this medicine with other people.

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Ref.: 03-5177-R6

Revised: January, 2002

02C-036-3240-1 **MASTER**

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02D-036-3543-1
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

features

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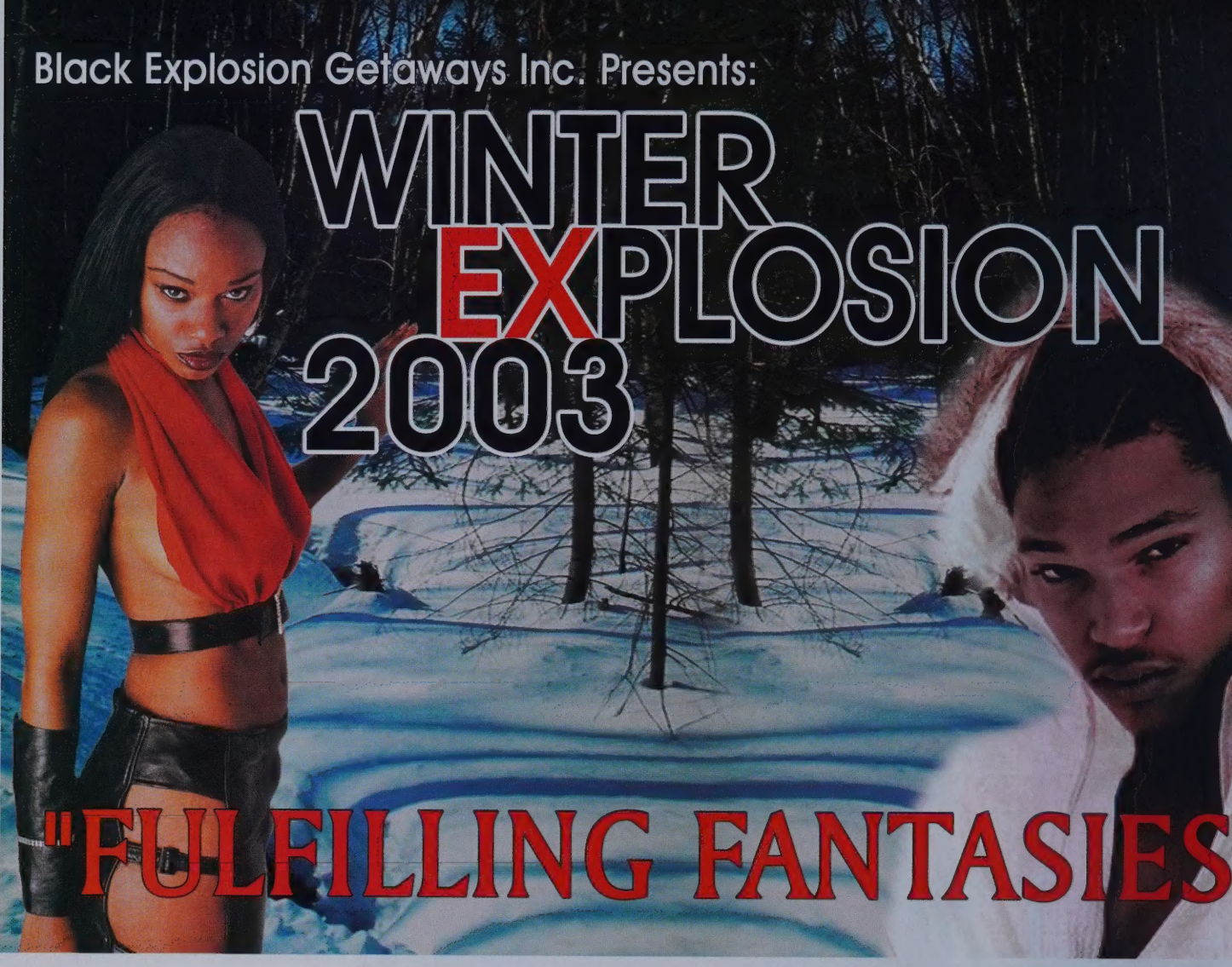
Venus spotlights the Top 20 Black Icons who have a special place in the hearts of gays and lesbians. Read all about the divas, the divos and the quiet soldiers who keep turning it out!

60 **Pitch Power**
Meet Maisha Yearwood, a film writer-creator who has several sitcom and film projects in the works. Read how this young writer has major Hollywood production houses sold on her ideas.

95 **Death of a Poetic Genius**
Prolific poet and educator June Jordan died last June, just a year and a half after writer Shirlette Ammons sat in on one of Jordan's classes at the University of California at Berkeley. Ammons remembers inspirational moments from that day with Jordan and pays tribute to an almost unsung hero in the African American struggle.

Maisha Yearwood



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Lester Cohen/Wireimage

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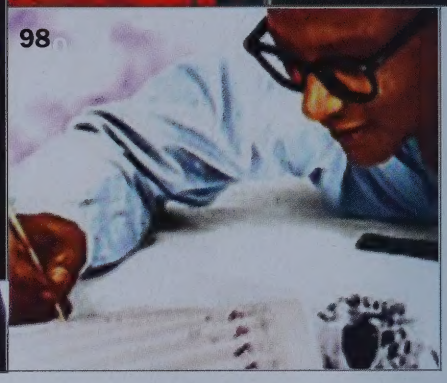

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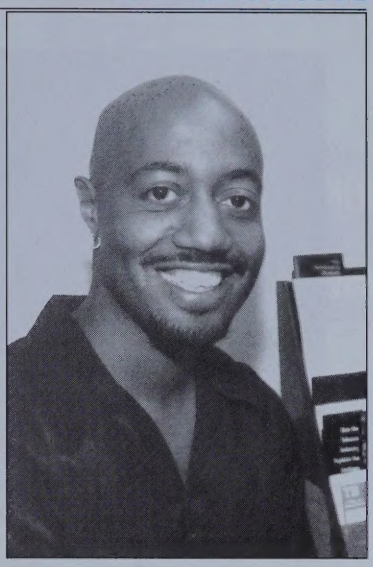
In the last issue of Venus, Dorinda Henry criticized the Human Rights Campaign's relationship with the Black Gay Community (*Bridge Over Troubled Waters*, Vol. 8, No. 3). Donna Payne from the Human Rights Campaign responds to Henry's accusations.

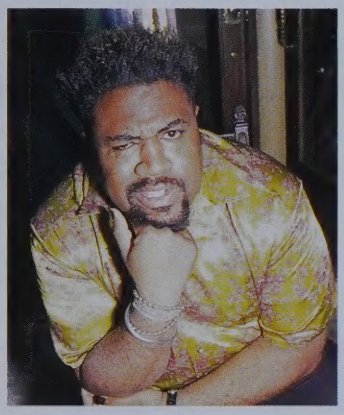
98 Legendary
Composer and pianist Billy Strayhorn was more than just Duke Ellington's primary collaborator. Venus remembers the life and contributions of an openly-gay musician.

Elyce Strong is an aspiring television writer, living in Los Angeles. She was raised in Memphis, Tenn., attended Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga., and worked in news for many years after graduation. She soon tired of news and began investigating dramatic television writing, which lead to her move to the West Coast. Currently, she works as an assistant to Emmy Award-winning writer David Mills (HBO's *The Corner, NYPD Blue, ER*). Author of *The Top 20 Black Icons*, pg. 36, Elyce says, "This list of Who's Who make me proud to be Black! It's a potpourri of impressive personalities of our parent's generation, ours, and our children's."

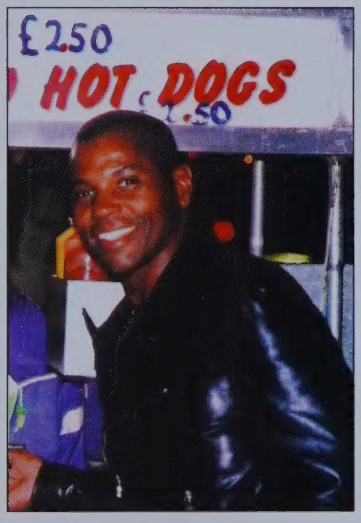


Craig Washington was born and lovingly raised by Anna and Leon Washington in Queens, New York and has lived in Atlanta for 10 years. His writings have been published in Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Arise, Clikque, and Southern Voice. He currently serves as executive director for the Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Center. Check his story Stand up & Represent on pg. 75

Anderson Jones is based in Los Angeles, where he met bicoastal Maisha Yearwood. [see pg. 60.] Jones writes Movie Scoop, a weekly column about movie industry news and buzz for E! Online. "I think she's an inspiration for all of us Black folks in entertainment," he says. Jones has worked for the Detroit Free News, Philadelphia Inquirer and freelanced for Entertainment Weekly, The New York Times. He's also published Men Together, a photo-essay book that documents gay men in long-term relationships.



Shirlette Ammons is a writer of working class currently residing in Raleigh, N.C. "I draw strength from June Jordan's quote, 'A woman's body is the universal shelter.' It inspires me to rely on that salient space, which is my spiritual artsource." Shirlette's first book of poetry entitled, Stumphole: Anthology of Backwoods Blood, was released this summer (www.stumphole.com). She is also the bassist/vocalist for the Raleigh-based band, stumP. Read her tribute to Jordan on pg. 95



Michael K. Watts serves as 'Guest Editor' for this issue of Venus, playing an integral role in the cover story on Black Icons. Michael's nine-year background as an entertainment journalist for FOX and MTV helped make this month's task a breeze. "Our staff had a hard time narrowing the pool down to just 20 icons. There are so many who have touched our lives in so many ways," Michael says. He also wrote the recent cover stories on Meshell Ndegeocello and Veronica Simmons. Michael resides in New York City.

Michael A. Adams cruises through the streets, shops, spas and restaurants in London and sends us the 411 on where and how the British get down. With his own new travel television pilot in the editing room this 'prince of travel' is always on the go but never too busy to keep VENUS readers in the know.

publisher's note

Jena Jones

It's been a long time coming, but we finally get to collectively say, "Bravo!" to 20 of our favorite Black icons. Their names are household words but to Black gay folks, they are even more special either because of the support they have shown our community or because of their sheer fabulousness. Elyce Strong and Michael K. Watts had a tough time keeping the list to 20. (See if you agree with the mostly entertainer-filled list, page 40.) Then it's on to Hollywood where screenwriter Maisha Yearwood talks to E! Entertainment's Andy Jones about her career and the success she is enjoying, in "Power of the Pitch," on page 56.

Any day is World AIDS day when you are infected with or threatened by the virus. Our special section on AIDS in the African-American community brings awareness through features on Bishop Rainey Cheeks, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and an eye-opening story that will bring sistahs out of denial about their "down-low" men, page 66. Enjoy the issue!

Charlene Cothran

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Guess Editor *Michael K. Watts*

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Contributing Writers *Michael A. Adams, Shirlette Ammons, Dr. Alaric Blair, Stanley Bennett Clay, Jerry Daniels, Anderson Jones, Steve Langley, G. B. Mann, Donna Payne, Elyce Strong, Craig Washington*

Photography *Cover by Jeff Vespa Craig Bailey, R J Capak, Michael Caufield, Lester Cohen, Steve Granitz, Darryl L. Matthew, Tina Paul, Steve Tackeff, Jeff Vespa*

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

National Advertising Director *Charlene Cothran Higher Ground Marketing Group 609/695-4500*

PRODUCTION

Art Director & Production Manager *Higher Ground Creative Group*

CIRCULATION

Director of Circulation *Marian Farrah*

New Subscribers, Address Changes, Back Issue Orders *800/642-7535 or www.venusmagazine.com*

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Venus is published 6 times per year by
Cothran Communications, Inc.
P. O. Box 4167
Hamilton, NJ 08610
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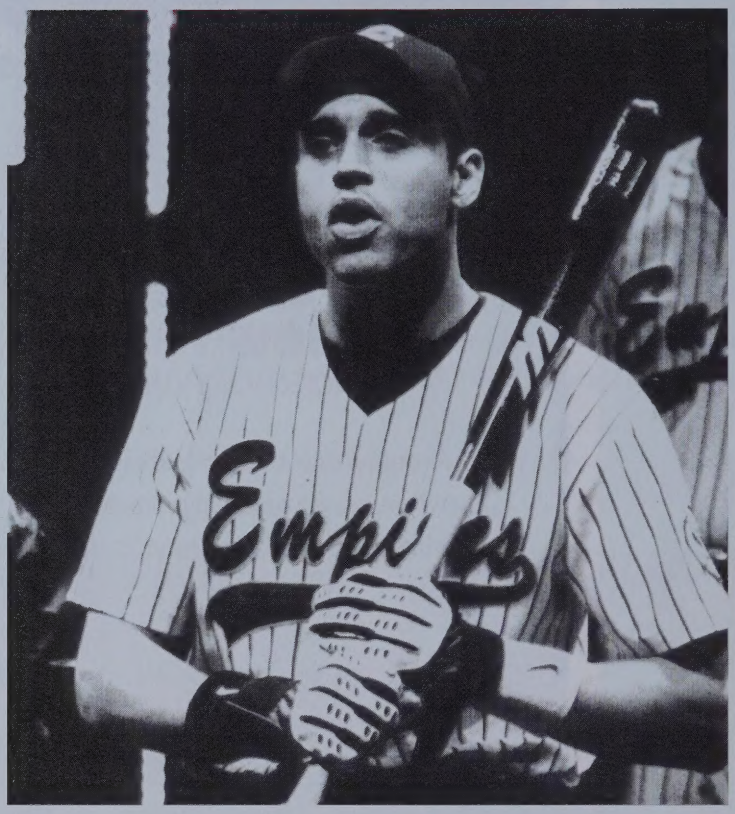

An openly gay playa bats with no shame in his game

words by Steve Langley

> "At a news conference at the peak of his Major League Baseball career, Darren Lemming comes out swinging and not both ways, either. He coyly reveals that, off the field, he bats only with the boys."

At a news conference at the peak of his Major League Baseball career, Darren Lemming comes out swinging—and not both ways, either. He coyly reveals that off the field he bats only with the boys.

This bombshell comes in the early innings of *Take Me Out*, the new Richard Greenberg play that premiered in London and runs through Oct. 27 at the Joseph Papp Public Theater in New York.

We don't see Darren wrestle with whether or how he should break the news. No rumors, jilted lover or tabloid photos force him out. He just does it.

And why shouldn't he? The product of a white mother and a Black father, Darren is high yella, fine, buffed, butch, brilliant, widely praised and highly paid. Whom shall he fear? God? As far as he's concerned, he is God.

Such confidence keeps his teammates on their heels. Darren's presence in the shower gives them the creeps—even when he's not there. Since much of the story takes place in the locker room, there is ample nudity amid this multiracial cast—though size queens will not be impressed.

But for all the nakedness and sexual subtext, orchestrated for maximum effect by director Joe Mantello, there is no romance and no sex, at least not consensual. Darren (played with virile aloofness by Daniel Sunjata) talks a good game, but never about his love life. His homosexuality, evidently, is all in his head. In one bizarre twist, he sexually assaults a racist, homo-hating redneck relief pitcher in the shower, more out of anger than lust.

Two-thirds into this three-hour saga, Shane Mungit, the relief pitcher from the minor leagues, steals the spotlight, mainly because of the trouble he ignites. At this point, the play loses focus. Apparently for Greenberg, a gay dramatist who became obsessed with baseball three years ago, the story isn't about Darren or Shane. It's about the grand ole game.

Steve Langley is a playwright living in Washington, D.C. His latest work, Cut/Uncut, received a staged reading this summer at The Kennedy Center.

SAFETY INFORMATION

- COMBIVIR does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others
- COMBIVIR should be used with other HIV medicines
- Make sure to see your doctor regularly because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells
- A buildup of lactic acid in the blood and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen
- Low risk of problems with the pancreas in adults and adolescents
- The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose

Please see important information for COMBIVIR on adjacent page.

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Patient Information about COMBIVIR Tablets

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: lamivudine/zidovudine tablets

Please read this information before you start taking COMBIVIR. Staying informed will help you to work more closely with your doctor and healthcare team to determine what is best for you. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussion with your doctor. You should remain under a doctor's care when using COMBIVIR and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is COMBIVIR?

COMBIVIR is the brand name of a tablet that combines EPIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine tablets) [3TC®] and RETROVIR® (zidovudine) Tablets [ZDV], two drugs which are used to treat HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

How does COMBIVIR work?

COMBIVIR is a combination of lamivudine (la-MIV-u-deen) and zidovudine (Zi-DOHV-u-deen), two medicines (nucleoside analogues) that slow down the replication of the HIV virus. This can reduce the virus' ability to infect new cells. It may help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Lamivudine plus zidovudine when used together can have stronger (synergistic) effects against the virus. COMBIVIR is a convenient way of taking lamivudine and zidovudine. COMBIVIR should usually be taken with other anti-HIV therapy.

Will COMBIVIR work the same as EPIVIR and RETROVIR taken together?

Taking one COMBIVIR Tablet twice a day is the same as taking one EPIVIR 150 mg Tablet twice a day and either two RETROVIR 100 mg Capsules three times a day or one RETROVIR 300 mg Tablet twice a day.

How should I take COMBIVIR?

Take COMBIVIR as your doctor prescribes it. The recommended dose is one COMBIVIR Tablet orally two times a day, with or without food. To help make sure you will benefit from COMBIVIR, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays."

What should I do if I miss a dose of COMBIVIR?

If you miss a dose by more than 4 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 4 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of COMBIVIR at any one time.

Does COMBIVIR cure HIV infection or AIDS?

No, there is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking COMBIVIR may still develop infections or other illnesses associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important to remain under the care of a healthcare provider. Use of lamivudine plus zidovudine has been shown to help patients with HIV infection stay healthy and live longer.

Does COMBIVIR reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

No, COMBIVIR, as well as other HIV medications, has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take COMBIVIR?

You should not take COMBIVIR if you have had a serious allergic reaction to either lamivudine (also known as EPIVIR or 3TC) or zidovudine (also known as RETROVIR or ZDV).

Do not take COMBIVIR at the same time as EPIVIR or RETROVIR, or TRIZIVIR® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), because they also contain lamivudine and zidovudine.

Individual dosing with EPIVIR plus RETROVIR, rather than COMBIVIR, should be considered for:

- A child under 12 years of age.
- Anyone who requires dosage adjustments due to drug side effects or poor kidney function.

If you are 65 years of age or over, consult your healthcare professional about the functioning of your liver, kidneys, and heart; about other illnesses you may suffer from, and about any other medications you may be taking. It is possible that the dosage may need to be modified.

What medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my healthcare provider?

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking COMBIVIR. Ask your doctor about enrolling you in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: 1-800-258-4263.
- You are breast-feeding. Mothers infected with HIV should not breast-feed their infants because HIV is present in breast milk.

Also talk to your doctor about:

- Problems with your blood counts.
- Problems with your muscles.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease, such as hepatitis.

Can COMBIVIR be taken with other medications?

Yes. COMBIVIR can be taken with most other medications, including most anti-HIV drugs. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medications, over-the-counter or prescription, that you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of COMBIVIR?

Do not rely on this summary alone for information about side effects. Your healthcare provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects that may be relevant to you.

The safety of COMBIVIR is not expected to be different from the safety of EPIVIR and RETROVIR given separately.

In clinical studies of lamivudine plus zidovudine, side effects occurring in 5% or more of patients included: muscle and joint pain, headache, nausea, weakness and fatigue, nasal symptoms, cough, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, neuropathy, trouble sleeping, fever or chills, loss of appetite, dizziness, abdominal pain or cramps, depression, skin rashes, and indigestion.

It's important to know that serious side effects can occur with COMBIVIR, such as a decrease in red and white blood cells and muscle damage. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including nucleoside analogues.

For HIV-infected individuals, periodic blood tests are recommended. If certain changes occur in your laboratory results while you are taking COMBIVIR, particularly if you become anemic or if your white blood cell count falls too low, your medication may need to be adjusted; your doctor may prescribe EPIVIR plus RETROVIR separately in place of COMBIVIR.

Tell your doctor promptly about any side effects or other unusual symptoms you may experience. Although it may make you healthier, COMBIVIR does not cure HIV.

Safety Information

Make sure to see your doctor regularly, because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells. A buildup of acid in the blood, and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen. The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose.

Other Information

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep COMBIVIR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Like most prescription drugs, lamivudine and zidovudine were required to be tested on animals before they were allowed for human use. In animal studies with doses much higher than those used in humans, zidovudine was associated with vaginal tumors. Your healthcare provider can tell you more about how drugs are tested on animals and what the results of these tests may mean about safety for you.

How should I store COMBIVIR tablets?

COMBIVIR Tablets may be stored at room temperature and do not require refrigeration.

gsk GlaxoSmithKline
GlaxoSmithKline
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

This provides a summary of information about COMBIVIR. If you have any questions or concerns about COMBIVIR or HIV, talk to your healthcare provider.

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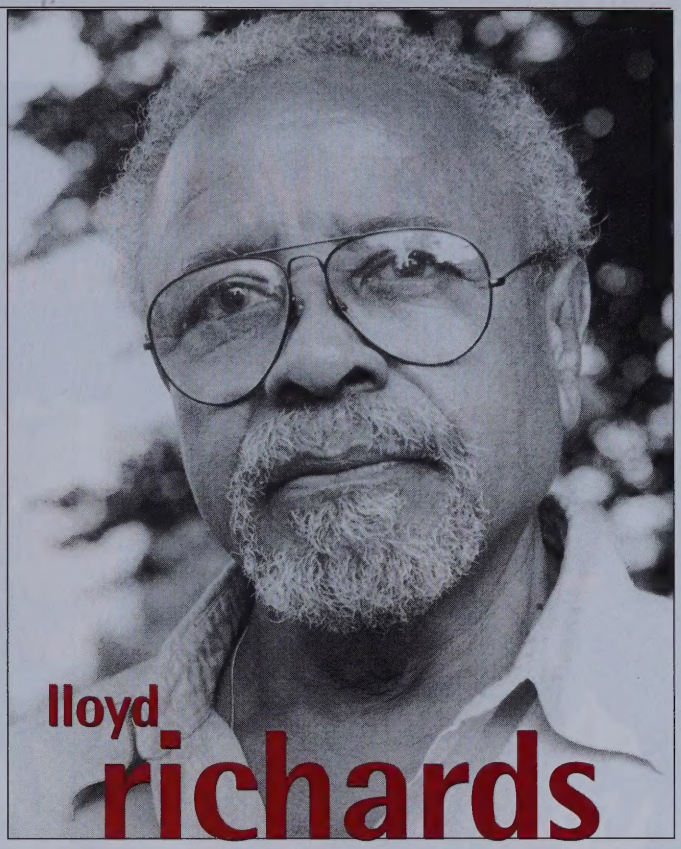
CBV501R0 December 2001

Tony award-winning director and drama innovator, Lloyd Richards is one of the pioneers of African-American Theatre and the winner of this year's Gish Prize.



One of the most revered pioneers of American Theatre, Tony Award-winning director and Yale University professor emeritus Lloyd Richards, will be presented with this year's Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for his part in shaping modern theater and guiding some of the today's leading voices to the stage. Richards will receive the honor—a silver medallion and approximately $200,000—at an awards ceremony held at the Hudson Theatre, Millennium Broadway, New York City this Fall.

In over 40 years of work, Richards has discovered and nurtured countless new playwrights, and staged some of the country's most significant stories, giving theatergoers an ever-changing and challenging perspective on life. He was instrumental in the ground-breaking introduction of the African-American voice to Broadway, making history in 1959 as the first Black director of the first Black drama by the first Black woman playwright on the Great Way. Over the years he's continued to expand the African-American experience onstage, working with talents like Sidney Poitier and August Wilson. Offstage, Richards made his mark by setting the standard for new play development with his staged readings at the National Playwright's Conference. At Yale, he brought his innovative techniques to drama education, experimenting and introducing his students to new plays and ideas. In 1993, Richards was recognized with the National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest honor for the arts.

crowns
celebrates fashion & faith

Lynda Gravatt, Lillias White, and Harriet D. Foy in Crowns. photo by T. Charles Erickson

regina taylor gets a nod from the AMEN corner

review by Charlene Cothran

You late, chile!" exclaimed Mother Katherine Taylor to a friend who recently presented her with the calendar version of Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry's book *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats.* The moment I saw the calendar 2 years ago, I knew I HAD to send it to her because she's a virtual twin to the woman on the cover. This only goes to prove that there's a Mother Taylor in every black [Baptist] Church. You know her . . . She proudly sits in the same spot, on the same pew every Sunday. Toes tapping out praise in spiked-healed paten-leather pumps and matching bag, dainty gloves and a Holy Ghost hanky spread across her lap. Her gorgeous silky brown skin is God-like and her perfectly rose colored lips are always perched with a hymn and testimony on the tip of her tongue. Oh, and, each and every Sunday she is crowned in one of her many fashionable hats.

Regina Taylor nostalgically gives homage to these women we all know and love. Her adaptation of *Crowns* for stage is an electrifying celebration of spirit, history, sorority and style.

Hats off to the casting director who lined up the very best in the business to bring us 90 minutes of sheer pride and joy. Complimenting each other in vocal and dramatic skill, are Lillias White (Velma), Ebony Jo-Ann (Mother Shaw), Janet Hubert (Wanda), Lynda Gravatt (Mabel), Carmen Ruby Floyd (Yolanda), Harriet D. Foy (Jeanette) and Lawrence Clayton (the man). Spirit-filled choreography by Ronald K. Brown keeps the revival moving as the characters musically and hilariously share memories, life lessons, and of course, 'the rules' for wearing a crown.

Flawless costumes by Emilio Sosa get a resounding 'AMEN' and the percussion by David Pleasant, who is excellent on tambourine and congos, is worthy of the highest praise. Now playing at Second Stage Theatre in New York City, call Walk Tall Girl Productions, Inc. at 718.919-5553 for group discount tickets.

"AN UPTOWN 'GUYS AND DOLLS!' A JAZZY MUSICAL BAUBLE WITH SASS AND CHARM! A HIGH-SPIRITED, MELODIC SCORE WITH TERRIFIC LYRICS. THE LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION IS THROUGH THE ROOF!" –Bruce Weber, The New York Times

"IF 'GUYS AND DOLLS' WERE SET IN HARLEM, IT WOULD LOOK LIKE 'LITTLE HAM'!" –NY Post

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Photo: Carol Rosegg

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Celeste E. Beatty, chief executive officer of Harlem Brewing Co.

sugar hill golden ale

Launched to a New York and New Jersey public last summer, Harlem Brewing Co.'s Sugar Hill Golden Ale is microbrew ale described by *The New York Times* as "coppery-colored and fairly full-bodied but refreshing, with a nice hint of bitter orange in its finish."

"In some ways it's similar to the beer that the great kings and queens of Africa brewed," said Celeste E. Beatty, chief executive officer of the Black-owned business she founded in November 2000. The popularity of the brand in the Northeast region of the states has prompted interest in the product in other parts of the world. This fall, Sugar Hill Golden Ale will be available in Japan. In Washington, D.C., the National Democratic Club, a restaurant with private membership is interested in selling the beer to its customers.

Pete Arnold, general manager of the operation, described Sugar Hill Golden Ale as a "smooth, good-tasting product."

"And I'm not really crazy about a lot of microbrews," he said.

While passionate about running the Harlem Brewing Co., Beatty is more excited about re-establishing a legacy that started in Africa and breaking the stigma between Blacks and beer.

"I have a responsibility to reconnect [Blacks] to that heritage," she said. "[Africans] were, in fact, great brewers. And they did not brew malt liquor."

"I have a responsibility to reconnect [Blacks] to that heritage," she said. "[Africans] were, in fact, great brewers. And they did not brew malt liquor."

In the United States, Blacks are frequently associated with malt liquor, a drink that tends to contain, according to Beatty, unhealthy ingredients. Beatty notes that companies promoting such a product have targeted Blacks, especially in the advertisements.

Not only does the brewing business in the United States misrepresent Blacks, she said, but it also underrepresents the presence of Blacks or the ancient Africans' influence on brewing.

"You never hear about Blacks," she said.

Of course, there is the exception. Beatty said she was surprised to see a Black guy in a Sam Adams commercial some time ago.

—Jerry Daniels Jr.

Tanqueray
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MADE FROM THE WORLD'S FINEST BOTANICALS
LONDON DRY GIN

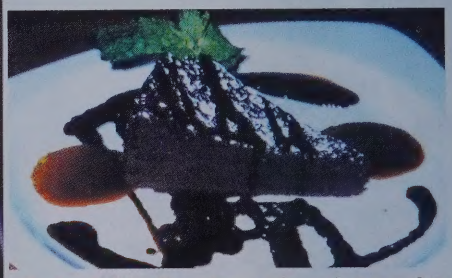
swank

words by Michael Andre Adams

Ask the average African American to share his or her perception of Milwaukee and the word segregation is bound to come up. However, before you miss, diss, or dismiss Milwaukee, here's the scoop on two fabulous restaurants owned by people of color.

Best described as a light eatery with an upscale appeal, Milwaukee's SWANK is posh, chic, and finger lickin' good on the real. The downtown delight opened just this past January. Founded by siblings Trevor and Kai Trimble and cousin Shannon Brown, it's more than a Black thing, it's a family affair.

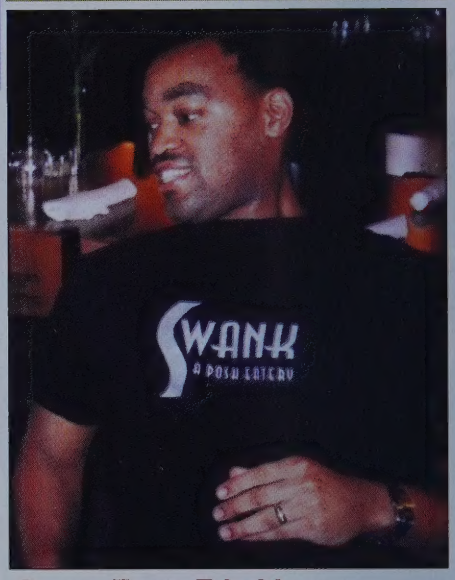
The most requested items on the menu include sesame-crusted scallops served with a mango puree, salmon steak with Thai sauce, and the Shrimp Po' Boy Sandwich. The crab cakes burst apart with real—as opposed to imitation—crabmeat, less the doughy filler. The granddaddy of them all is The Grand Swank, a multitiered and towering Epicurean delight for the true seafood lover. It starts out with shrimp, muscles, and crab claws on top, ending with a tempura-like batter-fried shrimp, scallops, and calamari below. If you like crispy catfish, you'll love theirs. And by all means, hit the Flourless Chocolate Cake for dessert. Your waistline may not thank you, but your soul definitely will.



Delectable flourless chocolate cake with fresh mint garnish.

Getting There:

Swank is located at 628 N. Water St. in the heart of Milwaukee, WI Private rooms and catering available. Lunch: 11-2 p.m. (M-F), Dinner: 5-10 p.m. (M-Th) till midnight Fri & Sat. Average ticket $10/lunch, $20/dinner with beverage (excluding alcohol). 414/27-SWANK; www.swankeatery.com.



Owner Tevor Trimble

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[l-r] Blake Kimbrough-Curator, "Artist Showcase Series" of New York City; featured artists Otto Neals and Ann Tanksley [whose painting is display at left]; Melvin Marshall Curator and Executive Producer.

a lesson in marshall arts

Art Collector Challenges African Americans to Start Owning Their Own Culture

Melvin A. Marshall has a mission: To guide African Americans to better appreciate their rich visual artistic history. To this end, he has started a national art tour to introduce and enlighten the significant contributions that artists of African descent have made to our national, visual, artistic culture.

This year, Marshall, 36, has inaugurated his Artist Showcase Series in New York City. The exhibit he says "was a big success." The showcase is a traveling national art series that highlights significant accomplishments of five 20th century artists of African descent. The exhibit in New York City included important paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by master artists Ann Tanksley and Otto Neals, and works by contemporary artists Cheryl Warrick, Francks Francois Deceus, and Willie Torbert. Marshall plans to showcase additional artists as he travels to different cities around the country.

Consistent with Marshall's vision of educating the public, the showcase will provide an opportunity for collectors to learn about and better appreciate the contributions made by these visual artists to their cultural legacy. The show will continue to Los Angeles during the week of Nov. 3, 2002, and will stop in Chicago, San Francisco, Detroit, and Washington D.C., among other cities.

"I first started buying art when I left college in the late 1980s and have been collecting ever since," Marshall said. He adds that collecting art has been a history lesson on a part of his Black culture that seems to be largely ignored: "the importance of artists of African descent to the international art scene."

"In addition, I am just beginning to fully appreciate the significant contributions that many other artists have made and are currently making. One such man is the master artist, author, curator, and educator Dr. David C. Driskell." Driskell, Marshall explains, "is our national treasure in the art world. "He has received many prestigious accolades and awards, including the National Medal of the Arts from President Clinton, for a lifetime of excellence and achievement in the arts. "We have not properly documented the vast importance of Dr. Driskell's influence on the art world over the past 45 to 50 years." Driskell was also Marshall's honorary guest at the inaugural event.

But Marshall's personal history may be as fascinating as the many artists that he is so dedicated to teaching us about. He is a native of New Orleans, and moved with his family to the San Francisco Bay area at the age of 11. Upon graduating from a top college preparatory school, Marshall enrolled in the College of Chemistry at

> "African-American art [is] undervalued, certainly underappreciated and most likely a good investment."

the University of California at Berkeley. After spearheading a successful campaign to establish a credit union–the first of its kind for students and faculty at Berkeley–Marshall discovered that he had an interest and a talent for things financial. After college he headed for Wall Street for a career in finance, where he joined J.P. Morgan & Co. as a Foreign Currency Trader. As part of his duties, Marshall spent long stints working in Europe. Marshall was impressed with the quality and number of fine museums he visited in Europe, noting,

"The Europeans, it seemed to me, had such a high respect for art, and modern European masters such as Picasso garnered inspiration from the so-called 'primitive' art of Africa. When I thought about both Picasso's many forays to the Trocadero, the ethnological museum in Paris, as well as the fact that Europe recognized that jazz was an art form at a time when America viewed it as merely dissolute, I experienced an epiphany: African-American art [is] undervalued, certainly underappreciated and most likely a good investment."

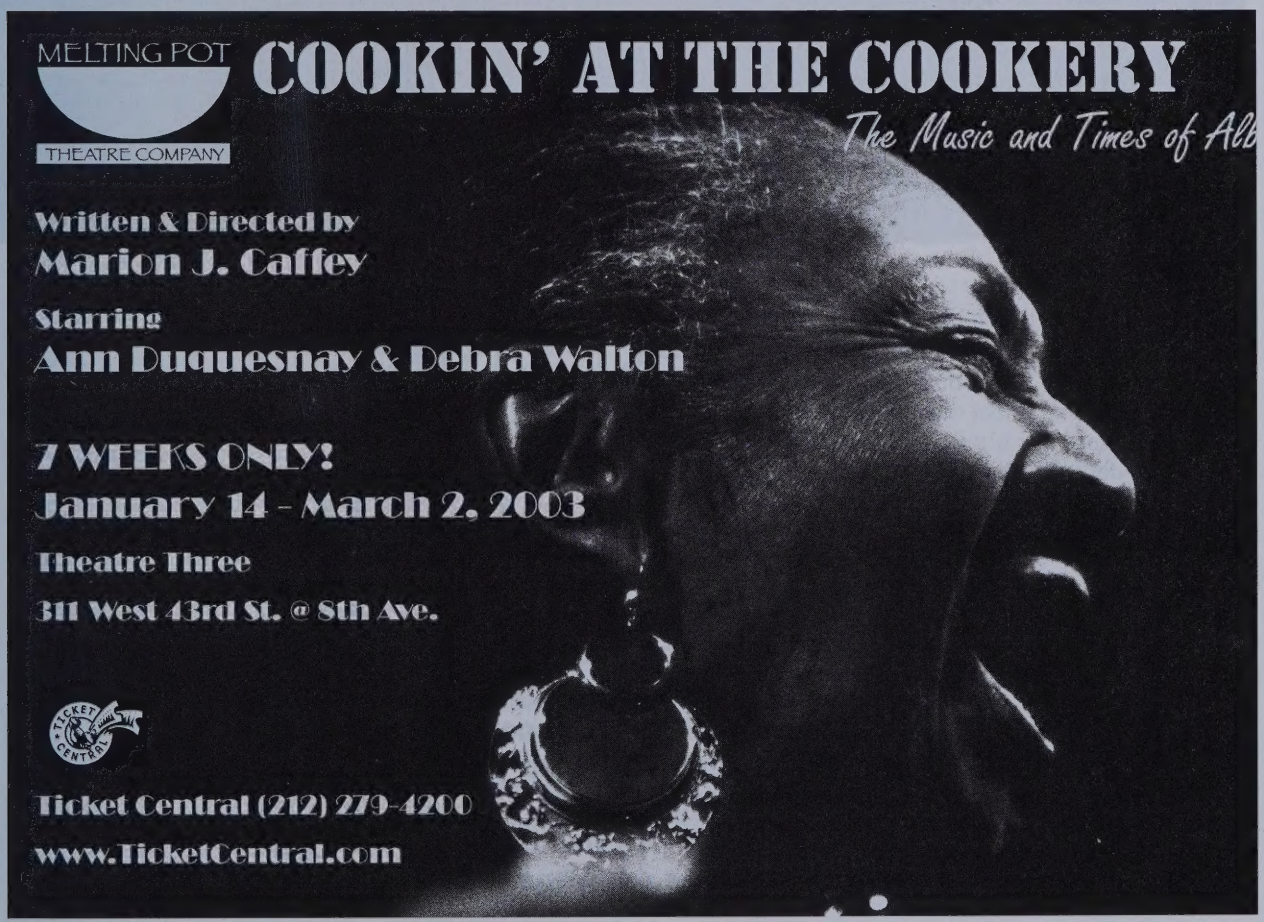
Marshall became an avid collector of African-American art, acquiring an impressive collection, which includes such masters as William H. Johnson, Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence. In a move that shocked his friends and family, Marshall left a burgeoning career on Wall Street in order to form two small companies, Marshall Arts, Ltd. and Hidden Heritage Productions, both of whose mission is to highlight the works of unknown, but important, African-American artists. Soon Marshall was lecturing at the Smithsonian and assisting his mentor, the late Thurlow Evans Tibbs Jr., in appraising art. Marshall and his business partner, Blake Kimbrough, catalogued the collection that Tibbs bequeathed to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., a vast collection containing 20,000 items representing over 600 artists.

Marshall is currently a museum curator and director on the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporian Arts (MoCADA) in Brooklyn, NY. He is very busy these days, acting as curator, lecturer and researcher. He is next co-curating an exhibit at MoCADA on the history of the African American master printmakers to open this fall.

He has also recently published an article in the International Review of African-American Art and is collaborating with the Hampton University Museum on a traveling museum exhibition featuring the works of Charles Sebree. Marshall has done ground-breaking research on Sebree and has discovered over 150 pieces of his artwork.

"Thornton Wilder discovered him; Gertrude Stein collected him; Pablo Picasso commented favorably on his work, and yet America knows very little about Charles Sebree, a man who helped to launch the careers of Harry Belafonte and Eartha Kitt and encouraged Toni Morrison to be a writer," Marshall lamented. "As the owner of his most significant work of the World War II era, I feel it is my duty to inform America about this unknown master."

For information on his upcoming traveling exhibit and art shows, please visit his Web site at www.MMFineArts.com.



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test your kitchen personality

Planning your dream kitchen? Take this quiz to help confirm your cooking needs and style preferences. Your score will serve as a guide to help you select appliances and kitchen designs that express you. Circle the letter that best describes your lifestyle.

When you entertain, you are most likely to:

A. Try a trendy recipe you've just read about.
B. Recreate a favorite recipe your mother used to make.
C. Create an entirely new recipe from scratch.

When eating out with friends, you are most likely to:

A. Enjoy an elegant meal in a gourmet restaurant.
B. Have burgers and malts at a '50s diner.
C. Find an off-the-beaten-path cafe that serves authentic Asian.

At gatherings, you generally like to:

A. Be the life of the party.
B. Work behind the scenes and then watch guests enjoy.
C. Be the official social director, bringing interesting people together.

When you cook for yourself, you're likely to:

A. Concoct tasty creations based on what you have on hand.
B. Make comfort food.
C. Try an elaborate recipe that you've never tried before.

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When you shop for clothes, you are more likely to purchase:
A. The latest styles on the runways.
B. Classics that never go out of style.
C. Items and accessories to create unexpected combinations.

When you travel, you are most likely to choose:
A. A luxurious resort in a popular, exotic location.
B. A "See America" trip that includes tours of historic locations.
C. An adventure vacation, such as mountain climbing or rafting.

Your favorite colors are:
A. Classic, stylish neutrals.
B. Restful colors that make you feel cozy and comfortable.
C. Energizing colors that make you feel creative and alive.

You can't resist buying things that make you feel:
A. Stylish and sophisticated.
B. Efficient and practical.
C. Up-to-date on the latest technologies.

Which do you like most about yourself?
A. Your looks.
B. Your intelligence.
C. Your creativity.

You prefer to spend your free time:
A. With friends who appreciate your sense of style.
B. Relaxing at home with your family.
C. Meeting new people and exploring new places.

SCORING

If you answered mostly with the letter "A," you may have a contemporary kitchen personality. You enjoy the latest styles and trends. You enjoy the newest, most interesting foods. You enjoy surrounding yourself with people and things that reflect your unique sense of style. Your ideal kitchen would include a double wall oven and a sleek downdraft cooktop.

If you answered mostly with the letter "B," you may have a traditional kitchen personality. Your home is the center of your universe. You enjoy foods that evoke family traditions, and you also enjoy creating traditions of your own. You like to surround yourself with people and things that make you and your family feel a sense of warmth and comfort. Your dream kitchen could very well include a slide-in range or a new conventional gas cooktop.

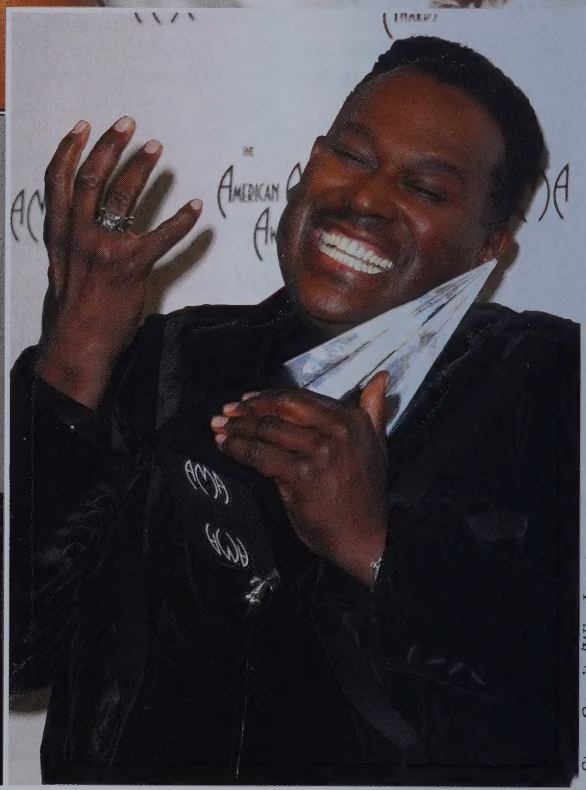
If you answered mostly with the letter "C," you may have a stainless kitchen personality. You are a chef in the truest sense of the word. When it comes to cooking, you enjoy creating innovative new recipes that delight your guests. You like to try the untried, experiment with exotic new combinations and test your creativity. You want high-performance appliances with the latest technologies that enable you to do your best work. Some of your appliance favorites might be a dual-fuel range or a downdraft cooktop.

House Beautiful

Proud of the work you've done on your home? We're looking for black gay homeowners with fabulous interiors designs to feature in an upcoming issue. Email us at thecamp@venusmagazine.com.

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image



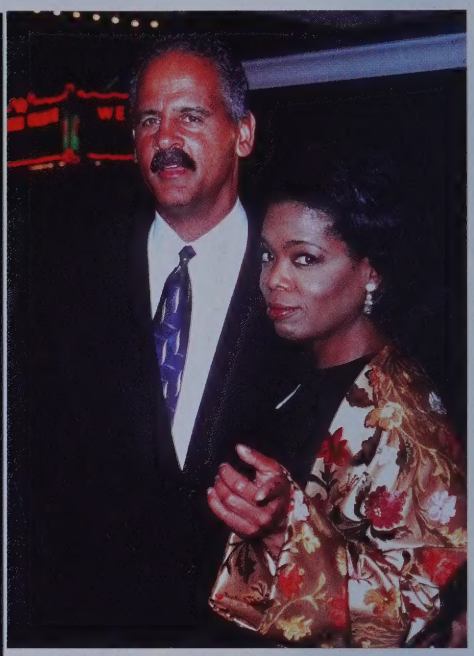
Steve Granitz/Wire Image

The 20 Hottest Black icons & Why We Love Them

They turn it out. They turn us on. They serve on-camera and behind the scenes. They are icons for the Black gay community. In this issue, Venus highlights the careers of 20 public figures who are highly revered by Black gays and lesbians. While these icons are not gay, they all have made a special connection with our community through their work, words, and actions. So, as Venus salutes these icons, check out their stories, their claims to fame, and how they continue to turn heads.

words by Elyce Strong
edited by Michael K. Watts

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image



Oprah Winfrey

Claim to Fame Queen of Talk
Why We Love Her Because she recommends some great books. The country started reading again after her now-defunct Oprah's Book Club began in 1996. And because her magazine, *O*, is just the truth.
No She Didn't! Remain single all these years! Will she and Stedman ever get married? It has been 17 years, and we are just dying for the wedding of the century!
Yes She Did! Turn her post-show online gab-fest into a prime-time coda to her talk show called *Oprah After the Show* on the Oxygen cable network. The show fulfills her obligations as a partner in the network and allows her to retain her talk show master tapes, which she had previously relinquished.

Oprah spent her early years with her grandmother on a farm in Kosciusko, Miss., then with her mother in Milwaukee. She suffered abuse and molestation, so she was sent to live under her father's strict discipline in Nashville, which proved to be exactly what she needed. She attended Tennessee State University and began reporting at a local station in Nashville. She finally ended up in Chicago hosting WLS-TV's *AM Chicago*. A year later, it was the hottest show in town and in 1985 was renamed *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Oprah has received countless Daytime Emmy awards, and she has gone on to star in *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*, as well as produce film and television projects. Today, she is chairman of Harpo, Inc. and a modest billionaire. Oprah recently received the first-ever Bob Hope Humanitarian Award at the 54th Annual Emmy Awards. Her acceptance speech spoke volumes: "The guy on the street, the woman in the classroom, the Israeli, the Afghani, the Zuni, the Apache, the Irish, the Protestant, the Catholic, the gay, the straight, you, me—we all just want to know that we matter."

Maya Angelou

Claim to Fame One of the greatest writers of contemporary literature.
Why We Love Her Because inspiration flows like a river from her pen and her mouth. And she has a story for everything!
No She Didn't! Learn to speak five languages fluently: English, Spanish, French, Italian, and West African Fanti. (And some of us have trouble mastering the Queen's English!)
Yes She Did! Release her latest book this past spring, *A Song Flung Up to Heaven*, the sixth installment of her autobiography, which began over 30-years ago.

A true renaissance woman, Dr. Maya Angelou is a dancer, poet, educator, historian, author, actress, playwright, civil-rights activist, producer, and director. Born Marguerite Johnson in 1928 in St. Louis, she spent most of her early years in rural Arkansas. After being raped by her mother's boyfriend at age 8, she did not speak for almost five years. At 16, she had her first child. These early events sparked her best-selling book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the first of her six-part autobiography. She has gone on to write a total of 10 books, numerous poems, including the well-known *Phenomenal Woman*, and many plays and essays. In 1993, President Clinton asked her to write and recite an original work for his inauguration, making her only the second poet in U.S. history to have such an honor. In 1998, she made her directing debut with *Down In the Delta*, starring Alfre Woodard. Last spring, Angelou debuted her own line of Hallmark greeting cards and gifts, Life Mosaic, giving fans a chance to use her words to touch and inspire each other.

R.J Capak/Wire Image

Whitney Houston

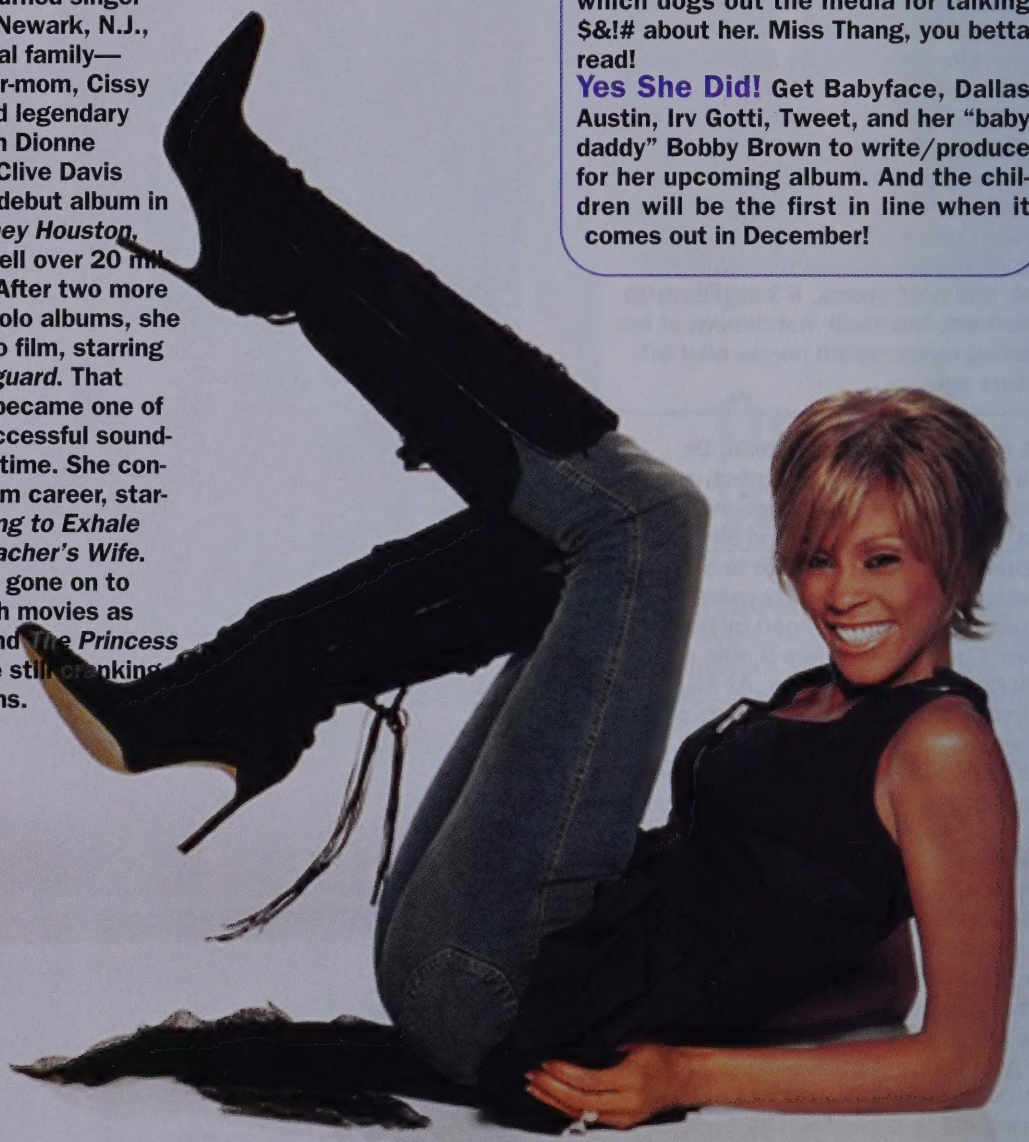
Claim to Fame Her soul-wrenching voice and her perfect pearly whites.

Why We Love Her There are no fronts, no airs. The ghetto-fabulous diva and down-ass chick will fight you in her Bob Mackey gown if she has to! And anyone who would call her husband her "baby daddy" in Carnegie Hall is alright with us!

No She Didn't! Record a song on her new album called "Whatcha Lookin' At," which dogs out the media for talking $&!# about her. Miss Thang, you betta read!

Yes She Did! Get Babyface, Dallas Austin, Irv Gotti, Tweet, and her "baby daddy" Bobby Brown to write/produce for her upcoming album. And the children will be the first in line when it comes out in December!

This model turned singer was born in Newark, N.J., into a musical family—gospel-singer-mom, Cissy Houston, and legendary singer-cousin Dionne Warwick. A Clive Davis prodigy, her debut album in 1985, *Whitney Houston*, went on to sell over 20 million copies. After two more successful solo albums, she ventured into film, starring in *The Bodyguard*. That soundtrack became one of the most successful soundtracks of all time. She continued her film career, starring in *Waiting to Exhale* and *The Preacher's Wife*. Houston has gone on to produce such movies as *Cinderella* and *The Princess Dairies* while still cranking out hit albums.



Michael Jackson

Claim to Fame King of Pop
Why We Love Him His glove, moonwalking, grabbing his crotch, saying, "Chamon." The list goes on and on.
No He Didn't! Accuse Tommy Mottola, chairman of Sony Music, of being a racist. Siting poor promotion of his *Invincible* album, Michael engaged in a heated dispute with his Sony label, Epic, earlier this year. Now, he is on a crusade to "heal" the music industry and protect the rights of recording artists. Alright! Michael the activist!
Yes He Did! Have a cameo in last summer's much-anticipated film, *Men in Black II*, playing Agent M. We had not seen Michael on the big-screen since *The Wiz*!

Born in Gary, In., Michael found himself leading his singing brothers in The Jackson Five by the time he was four. They became one of the biggest groups of the 1970s. In 1979, he released *Off The Wall*, earning him his first Grammy, three American Music Awards, and jump-starting his amazing solo career. In 1983, he released *Thriller*, which won eight Grammy awards, eight American Music Awards, and became the biggest-selling album of all time, selling more than 46 million copies worldwide.

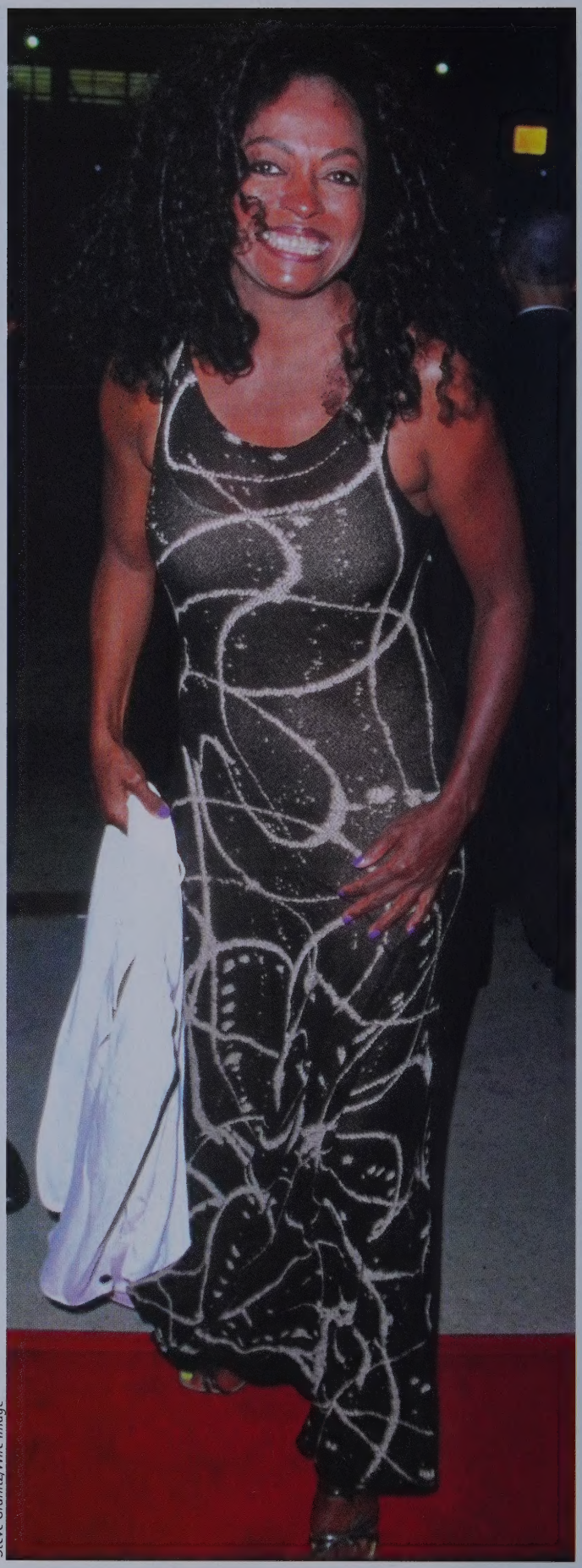
His next albums, *Bad* and *Dangerous* both achieved more than seven times platinum status, but Michael soon found himself in the news for other reasons. He married Lisa Marie Presley, divorced her, and remarried another woman whom he's had two children with. His latest album, *Invincible*, was released last year.

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Diana Ross

Claim to Fame She's the consummate diva with the big hair.
Why We Love Her 'Cause we all secretly want to be as much of a drama queen as she is! We live for her!
No She Didn't! Pat Lil' Kim's exposed breast on stage at the MTV Video Music Awards in 1999. Mother Supreme is sexy at 58 but would never wear anything like that!
Yes She Did! Enter a drug and alcohol rehab facility over the summer and got out in time to perform to sell-out crowds in Europe and the U.S. Grand diva!

Born Diane Ross in Detroit, the home of Motown Records, she was a founding member of The Supremes. After a long streak with no hits, the ladies hit No. 1 with "Where Did Our Love Go," and 11 more No.1s followed. In 1970, Diana went solo and almost simultaneously began her acting career. Her first two films were partially directed by Motown mogul Berry Gordy himself. Her film debut, Lady Sings The Blues, for which she got an Academy Award nomination, was followed by Mahogany and The Wiz. Two TV films, Out of Darkness and Double Platinum, would continue to show Diana's acting skills through the 1990s. Though Diana has never won a Grammy, her mantelpiece is overrun with all the other awards she's received. She has just published a coffee-table book of photos from her life and career entitled Diana Ross: Going Back.



Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Luther Vandross

Claim to Fame That sexy, sultry voice!
Why We Love Him Because he makes the best love-making music, no matter how much he weighs.
No He Didn't! Refuse to answer any media questions about his sexuality. He feels he does not owe his fans any details about his personal life, and frankly, it's none of anybody's business. Enough said.
Yes He Did! Release Luther Vandross last year. His J Records debut is a soulful album that epitomizes classic Luther, and he's been touring ever since.

Born in the Bronx, N.Y., Vandross began his musical career by writing and performing jingles for television commercials. He got his big break when he met up with David Bowie and performed backup vocals as well as co-wrote a No. 1 hit on Bowie's 1975 album. Vandross then sang backup for such legends as Barbra Streisand, Carly Simon, and Donna Summer. He soon formed a group called Luther and released two albums, which received little attention. He even produced albums for Aretha Franklin. But his 1981 debut solo album, *Never Too Much*, officially put him on the map. He has had over 15 albums since then, many of them platinum. Vandross has won four Grammy awards and a host of other awards.

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

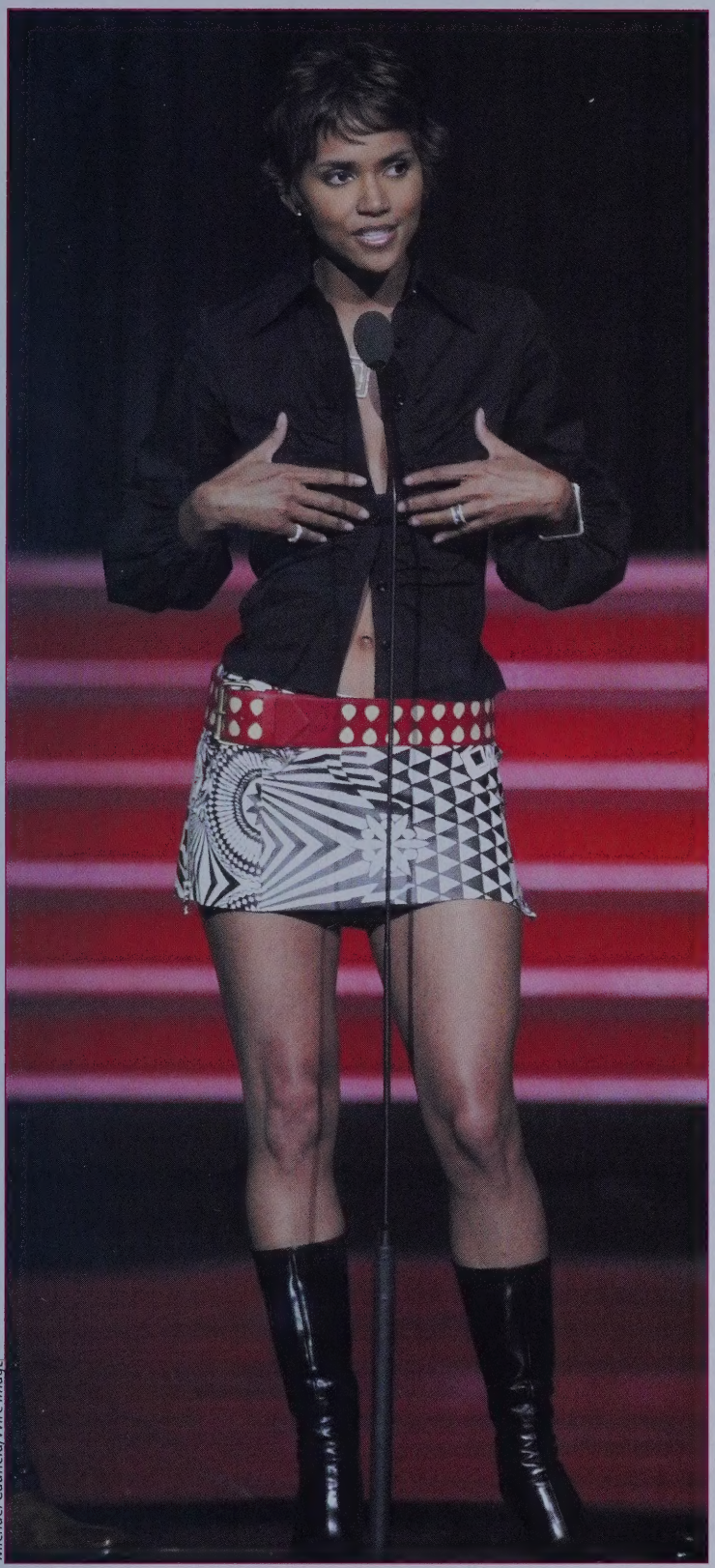
icons

Mary J. Blige

Claim to Fame Queen of Hip Hop Soul
Why We Love Her She sings from the heart. When she sings, "No more drama," you feel her, and you know she feels you!
No She Didn't! Tell us that she is engaged but refused to give us any details. Come on, Mary, what's the 411 on your man? Inquiring minds want to know! When's the wedding? Is he fine?
Yes She Did! Head back to the studio with P. Diddy to record her next album just a few weeks after ending her "No More Drama" tour in August. This will be the 10-year anniversary of their first collaboration, *What's the 411?*

Michael Caulfield/Wire Image

Mary J. was born in the Bronx, N.Y. in 1971 and began singing in her church choir at an early age. She made a demo when she was 17, and the rest is history. Sean "P. Diddy" Combs signed her to Uptown Records and perfected her sound on her debut 1992 album, *What's the 411?*, which sold over 2 million copies. A few years later, she released *My Life*, which earned her a Grammy nomination. She has released a total of five albums and received numerous accolades and awards. In 2000, the evolving Blige starred in the dramatic film *Prison Song*. In August, Mary released *Dance For Me*, her second remix album that has been blowing up in the clubs. Since then, she has begun work on her next album. And you can hear her on Hip-Hop artist Common's latest single "Come Close," and in R&B crooner Jaheim's music video for "Fabulous."



Michael Caulfield/Wire Image

Halle Berry

Claim to Fame Award-winning actress and model
Why We Love Her Because her beauty is absolutely flawless, but she's not afraid to portray some of the tackiest, ugliest characters on film. Then, she can flip it and serve glamour for Revlon! Work!
No She Didn't! Marry the finest, sexiest man in neo-soul music, Eric Benet. Oooh, yes! That Eric is the answer!
Yes He Did! Become the first African American to win an Academy Award for Best Actress. And she just became the latest Bond girl, starring as Jinx in the upcoming *Die Another Day*. Trailblazing diva-actress for the new millennium!

Born in Cleveland, and named after Halle Brothers department store there, Berry first found herself competing in several beauty pageants. She won the Miss Teen All-American Beauty Pageant in 1985, and the next year became the first runner-up in the Miss USA Pageant. Halle began modeling, and in 1991 she got her big acting break playing a crackhead in Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever*.

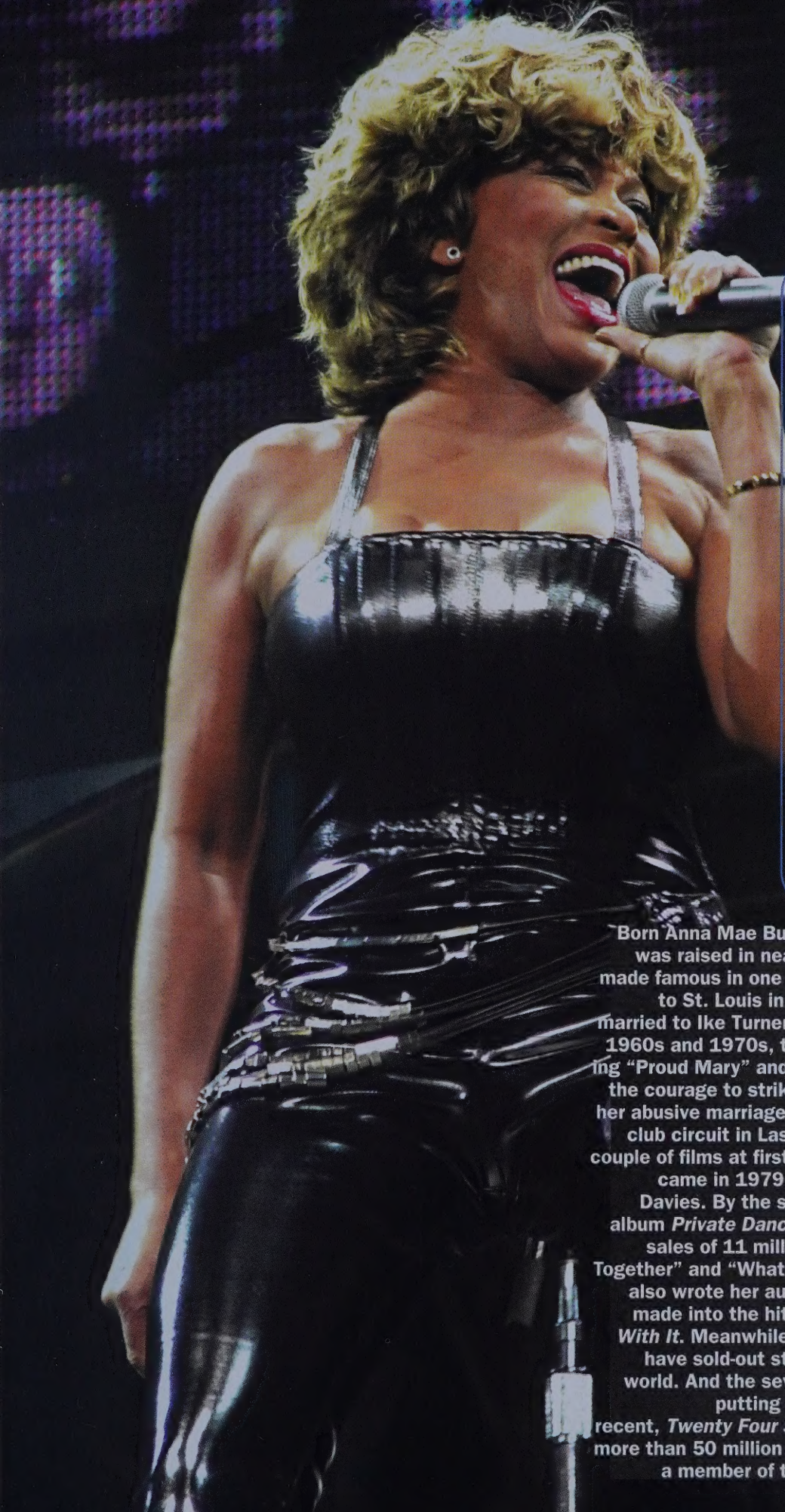
From there, she was cast in numerous movies, including *Boomerang*, *The Flintstones*, *Losing Isaiah*, *B.A.P.S.*, *Bulworth* and *Why Do Fools Fall in Love*. But she still did not get the respect she deserved in Hollywood. That all changed when she portrayed her own personal idol, Dorothy Dandridge, in the HBO movie, *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*. Films like *X-Men* and *Swordfish* would follow as she continued fulfilling her spokesmodel duties for Revlon. Berry received a Golden Globe Award and the Academy Award, both for Best Actress for her outstanding performance in Monster's Ball. Berry is currently filming *X-Men 2* in Vancouver for a next summer release, and she will produce a remake of *Foxy Brown*.

Angela Bassett

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Claim to Fame Award-winning actress
Why We Love Her Because she pours her soul into her performances like no other actress in Hollywood can. And check out her new look! Go, girl!
No She Didn't! Get the whole world riled up with her explanation for turning down the Oscar-winning role Halle Berry plays in Monster's Ball. While Bassett praised Berry's performance, she said the role simply was not for her. Miss Angela, do you! We ain't mad atcha!
Yes She Did! Win this year's Lena Horne Award for Outstanding Career Achievements in the Field of Entertainment at the recent Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards.

Bassett first got bit by the acting bug when she went to Washington, D.C., on a school field trip and attended a production of *Of Mice and Men*. She ended up studying Afro-American Studies at Yale University, then went on to earn a Master's Degree from its prestigious Drama School. Her big break came when John Singleton cast her as Cuba Gooding, Jr.'s mother in *Boyz N the Hood*. From there, she played opposite Denzel Washington in *Malcolm X*, then opposite Laurence Fishburne in *What's Love Got To Do With It*. Her portrayal of Tina Turner garnered her a Golden Globe Award and an Oscar nomination. Other movies to her credit include *Waiting to Exhale*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *The Score* and this year's *Sunshine State* and *The Rosa Parks Story*, which garnered her an Emmy nomination. She has received countless awards, including several NAACP Image Awards. Angela stars opposite Jeff Bridges, Penelope Cruz, Ed Harris, and Jessica Lange in *Masked* and *Anonymous*, due out next year.



Tina Turner

Claim to Fame The hardest working legs in show business and that piercing, powerful voice

Why We Love Her Because she endured abuse, courageously escaped and built a new career for herself, never looking back. If Tina can do that, we can do anything!

No She Didn't! Announce that her sold out Twenty Four Seven Tour in 2000 would be her last. Tina, come on, please roll down the river just one mo' time!

Yes He Did! Show up at the Giorgio Armani Spring 2003 Fashion Show in Milan last month sporting a new hairdo and still-flawless skin. Any woman who can serve like Tina at the age of 62 deserves a standing ovation! Show her some respect!

Born Anna Mae Bullock in Brownsville, Tenn., she was raised in nearby Nutbush, a small town she made famous in one of her songs. Anna Mae moved to St. Louis in 1956, and two years later was married to Ike Turner and singing in his band. In the 1960s and 1970s, they had a string of hits, including "Proud Mary" and "A Fool In Love." Turner found the courage to strike out on her own in 1976 once her abusive marriage ended. She worked the supper club circuit in Las Vegas and got small roles in a couple of films at first. Then Turner's second chance came in 1979, when she met manager Roger Davies. By the summer of 1984, her comeback album *Private Dancer* was on its way to worldwide sales of 11 million, led by the hits, "Let's Stay Together" and "What's Love Got To Do With It." She also wrote her autobiography, *I, Tina*, which was made into the hit biopic, *What's Love Got To Do With It*. Meanwhile, Tina's explosive stage shows have sold-out stadiums and arenas all over the world. And the seven-time Grammy winner is still putting out albums, including her most recent, *Twenty Four Seven*. To date, Turner has sold more than 50 million albums worldwide. She is also a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Janet Jackson

Claim to Fame Her classic R&B and pop hits and spectacular, electrifying stage shows.
Why We Love Her Miss Jackson has the best six-pack around. And by the gear she sports, she knows it. And the dance moves! She's not just Michael's little sister anymore.
No She Didn't! Reportedly date Matthew McConaughey, Jermaine Dupri, and *NSYNC's Justin Timberlake all in a six-month period. We have heard Janet speak of her "size" requirements in her men; does this mean that they ALL comply? Mmm...
Yes She Did! Recently team up with reggae hip-hopper Beenie Man for "Feel It Boy," the first single from his latest album, *Tropical Storm*. The single is already a hit and shooting up the charts. Do your thing, girl!

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

This 36-year-old sultry, singing diva was born in Gary, In., with the last name Jackson, so her career was almost chosen for her. As a teenager, she released two albums that were moderate successes. Then came *Control*, which skyrocketed her to super-stardom. Three years later, she won her first Grammy with the release of *Rhythm Nation 1814*. Her next two albums, *Janet.* and *The Velvet Rope*, both went multiplatinum, and her latest album *All For You* debuted at No.1 on Billboard's Hot 100 Chart. Her acting career began at age 7 when she strutted out on the Merv Griffin Show. Janet went on to star in TV shows *Good Times*, *Diff'rent Strokes*, and *Fame*, and in movies *Poetic Justice* and *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps*. She also recently made her second concert appearance on HBO with *Janet—Live in Hawaii*, which was the No. 1 DVD for several weeks after its September release. Janet also collaborated with Justin Timberlake on a song on his upcoming solo album entitled *(And She Said) Take Me Now*. She also recently wrote and recorded a song for Miramax's upcoming film Chicago.

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Patti Labelle

icons

Claim to Fame Her powerful voice that shows no mercy, and her wild, flamboyant hairstyles.

Why We Love Her Because she publicly shows her love for gays and lesbians. And all the children go up when she kicks off her shoes and rolls across the floor on stage. We feel ya, girl!

No She Didn't! Disappoint some fans by showing up late to an Los Angeles show and then using precious performance time to explain why. She had gone to visit a dear friend in the hospital and felt compelled to share the situation throughout the show. We understand, Patti! Just sing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and we will be just fine!

Yes She Did! Perform "Lady Marmalade" with Christina Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mya, and Pink, and still maintained her title as the Queen of Onstage Hollering. Christina can "sang," but trust, Patti can blow them all away!

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1944, Patti grew up running track, singing in the glee club and acting in high school plays, but she enjoyed singing the most. In the 1960s, she led the superstar girl group Patti LaBelle and the Bluebells. In the 1970s, there was LaBelle, and in the 1980s, there was just Patti LaBelle. With both groups, she had moderate success, including the 1975 #1 hit, "Lady Marmalade," but Patti became a household name as a solo artist, with hits like "New Attitude" and "On My Own." Patti got back into the acting, having her own TV sitcom Out All Night and a recurring role on A Different World. Patti even released a cookbook and a motivational book in the past two years. Her most recent album, When a Woman Loves, was released in 2000. Last year, Patti was awarded the Lena Horne Award for Outstanding Career Achievement at the Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards. This year found Patti showing of her Philadelphia home on MTV's Cribs, and playing the mother of Destiny's Child member Kelly Rowland in the music video for Rowland's duet with Nelly, "Dilemma."

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Claim to Fame His inspiring blend of hip-hop and contemporary and traditional gospel.

Why We Love Him Because he can make us get our groove on and praise the Lord at the same time. Can we get a witness?

No He Didn't! Change the name of his group at least twice? First, it was The Family. Then, it became God's Property. Next, there was Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation. What's up, Kirk? Does God keep telling you to change it?

Yes He Did! Release his latest album, *The Rebirth of Kirk Franklin*, which topped the Billboard Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Album chart earlier this year and was certified Gold.

Kirk Franklin

Franklin was born in Fort Worth, Texas, and raised by an older aunt. He was playing the piano by age 4 and was offered a recording contract by age 7. His aunt turned the contract down, but Franklin kept playing music. At age 11, he was appointed the Minister of Music at his church. It was then that he began to write and arrange music. By 1993, Franklin was being offered recording contracts again, and he finally chose a label, GospoCentric. Later that year, he released his first album, Kirk Franklin and the Family, and it put Kirk on the map. *Whatcha Lookin' 4* was released a few years later, earning Kirk his first Grammy. In July of 1997, *Stomp* was released, becoming a hit on both the gospel, pop, and R&B charts. Currently, Kirk is promoting his latest album on the Hopeville Tour with Yolanda Adams and Donnie McClurkin.

Pastor Shirley Caesar

Claim to Fame Queen of Gospel

Why We Love Her Because she practices what she preaches. And some of her music makes for fierce house remixes! Honey, "hold my mule" while I testify on the dance floor!

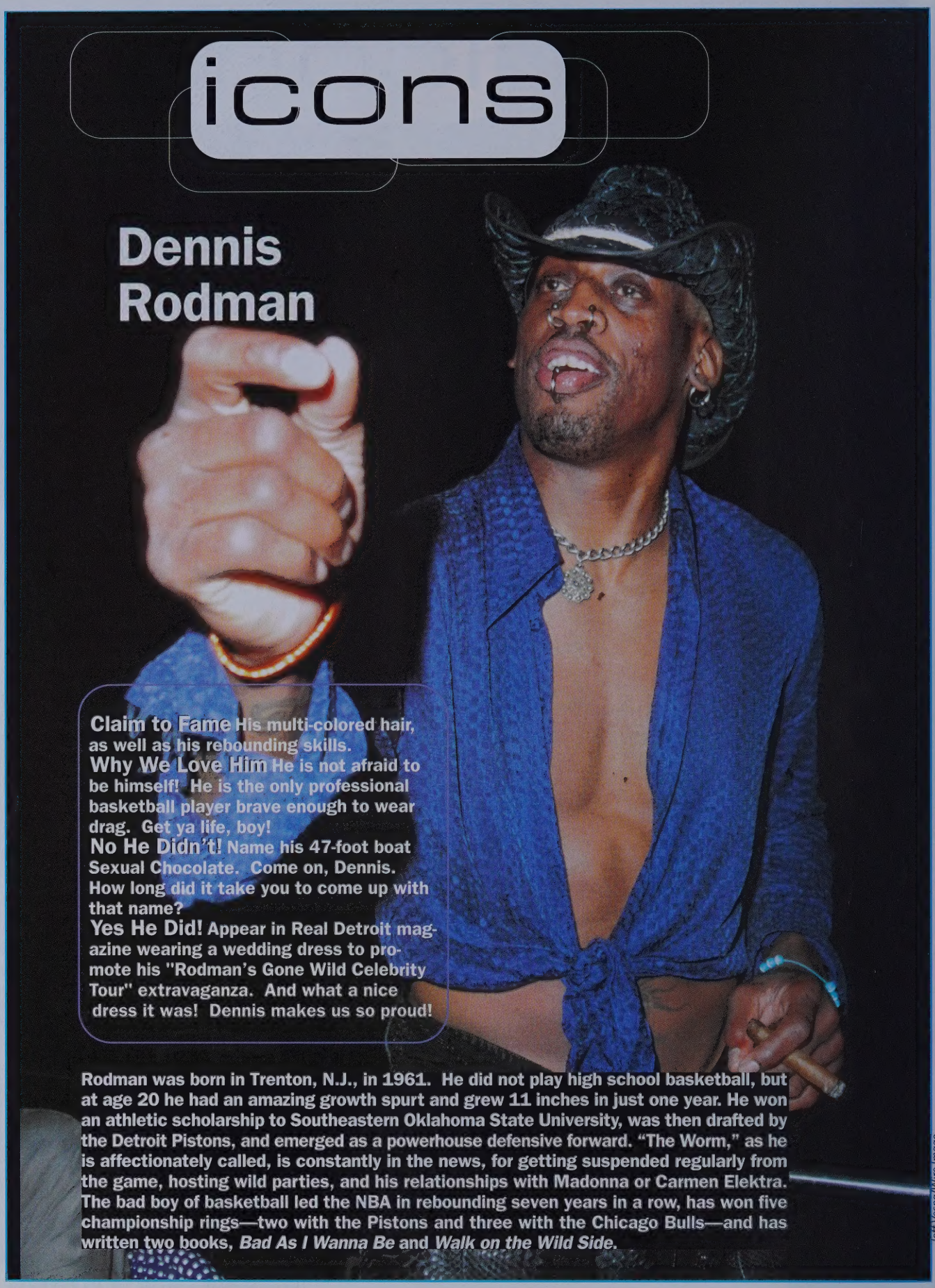
No She Didn't! Graduate magna cum laude with a B.A. in Business Marketing, despite high school teachers telling her she was not college material. And she has received numerous honorary doctorates from other universities, as well. Don't mess with a highly favored Christian with credentials!

Yes She Did! Last year, she released her 35th album, *You Can Make It*, a lively mixture of Gospel, Soul, and a little R&B.

Pastor Shirley Caesar has been in the ministry for over 40 years, and singing even longer. Born in Durham, N.C., her father died when she was 8, and she found herself taking care of her semi-invalid mother and her siblings. After graduating from college, she began her professional singing career. Within a decade Caesar became the second African-American woman to win a Grammy for a gospel performance, following in the footsteps of the legendary Mahalia Jackson. Pastor Caesar has had a stunning musical career with 10 Grammy Awards, 12 Stellar Awards, and 17 Dove Awards to her credits.

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Dennis Rodman



Claim to Fame His multi-colored hair, as well as his rebounding skills.

Why We Love Him He is not afraid to be himself! He is the only professional basketball player brave enough to wear drag. Get ya life, boy!

No He Didn't! Name his 47-foot boat Sexual Chocolate. Come on, Dennis. How long did it take you to come up with that name?

Yes He Did! Appear in Real Detroit magazine wearing a wedding dress to promote his "Rodman's Gone Wild Celebrity Tour" extravaganza. And what a nice dress it was! Dennis makes us so proud!

Rodman was born in Trenton, N.J., in 1961. He did not play high school basketball, but at age 20 he had an amazing growth spurt and grew 11 inches in just one year. He won an athletic scholarship to Southeastern Oklahoma State University, was then drafted by the Detroit Pistons, and emerged as a powerhouse defensive forward. "The Worm," as he is affectionately called, is constantly in the news, for getting suspended regularly from the game, hosting wild parties, and his relationships with Madonna or Carmen Elektra. The bad boy of basketball led the NBA in rebounding seven years in a row, has won five championship rings—two with the Pistons and three with the Chicago Bulls—and has written two books, *Bad As I Wanna Be* and *Walk on the Wild Side*.

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Claim to Fame Her androgynous persona and her sharp-cut hairstyles

Why We Love Her She is 50 years-old, and her body still looks tight. She's the ultimate dominatrix-sex kitten.

No She Didn't! Date a host of renaissance men in her life, including Dolph Lundgren. In 1996, she married a man 21 years her junior, her bodyguard, Atila Altaunbay. Alright, Miss Thang!

Yes She Did! Receive the honor as one of the VH-1's 100 Greatest Women of Rock and Roll. She is currently working on her latest album, and recently recorded tracks with rap-diva Lil' Kim.

Grace Jones

Born in Spanishtown, Jamaica, the 6-foot diva studied theater at Syracuse University, then gained notoriety as a top fashion model and actress in Italian movies. In 1977, she was offered a recording contract, which produced her first hit, "I Need a Man." She made a few more successful albums, most notably 1981's *Nightclubbing*, which produced the hit "Pull Up to the Bumper." Grace's infamous "*A One Man Show* was filmed for the big screen in 1981. She co-starred in a few small movies but got her big film break in 1984 opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Conan the Destroyer*. Her return to recording brought the 1985 hit, "Slave to the Rhythm," then with *Nipple To The Bottle* and The Apple Stretching. She continued putting out the albums and the movies, including 1985's *A View to A Kill* and 1992's *Boomerang*. Recently, she ventured back onto the stage, performing in *Celebration of the Lizard* with Billy Zane.

Jennifer Holliday

YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME!

words by Michael K. Watts

Jennifer Holliday touches my soul." That's one diehard gay fan's explanation of why the Broadway diva is an icon in the eyes and hearts of thousands of gays and lesbians. Back when she won the 1982 Tony Award for her portrayal of Effie "Melody" White in "Dreamgirls," Holliday, 42, says her undesirable size and the painful subjects in her songs drew gay and lesbian audiences to her. Twenty years later, gays and lesbians are an audience she owes a great deal.

"[Gays and lesbians] supported me throughout a time when no one else would. Not church people, not anybody," Holliday revealed about the lean times in her career. "Being able to sing at three or four o'clock in the morning at gay clubs paid not only my house note but supported my family."

> "Being able to sing at four in the morning at gay clubs paid not only my house note but supported my family."

Holliday's fans support her seemingly unconditionally—through the triumphs and the drama! She's definitely had her share of drama, especially with her "Dreamgirls" co-star Sheryl Lee Ralph. By the time "Dreamgirls" opened on Broadway, Holliday says the musical had become much less of the star vehicle that Ralph had wanted for herself, causing a bitter relationship between these leading ladies for years to come. "Sheryl Lee and I put our battle swords down about eight years ago," said Holliday setting the record straight. She says the hateful animosity between the Broadway divas is no more, and they are in touch from time to time.

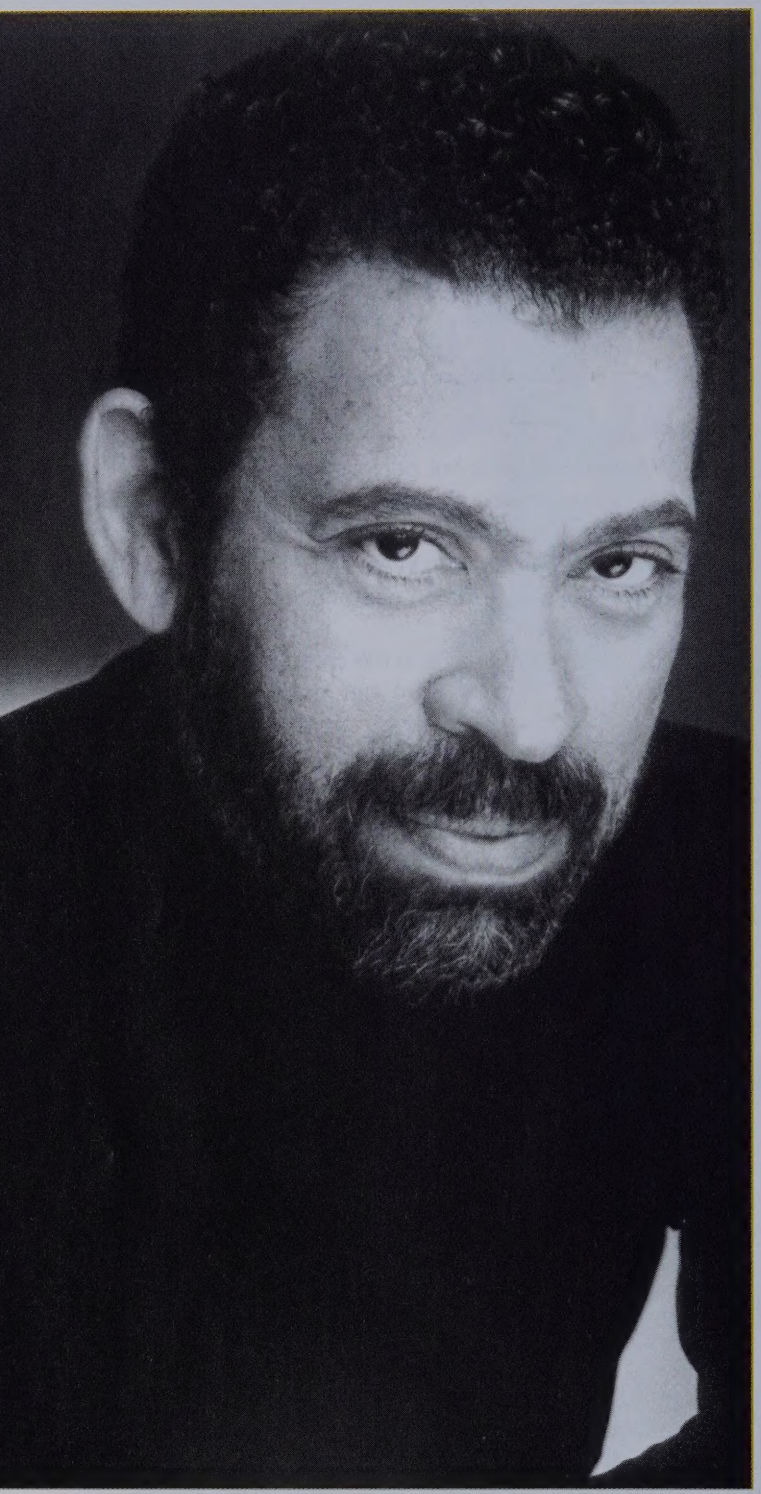
Today, the two-time Grammy Award-winning powerhouse performs regularly at gay pride celebrations and charity benefits across the country. But to hear Holliday's high-power dance hits like "No Frills Love," "Just Let Me Wait," and 1999's "Think It Over," fans will have to request them these days. "I'm just not as comfortable singing uptempo [songs] as I am singing ballads," admitted the chanteuse, referring to her bone-chilling slow-jams like "I Am Love" and "Say You Love Me."

When Holliday is not performing, she is maintaining her vegetarian diet, sailing or enjoying a game of Scrabble with friends in her New York City home. And, she's got a new man in her life! "I'm very much in love," Holliday revealed ecstatically of her beau of a year and a half.

Holliday began singing in the church choir at age 9 in her native Houston, Texas. At the ripe age of 18, she got an audition with the Broadway smash "Your Arms Too Short to Box with God," and she was hired for the lead role the same day. "Dreamgirls" would follow, producing her number one, Grammy Award-winning torch-ballad "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going." Several albums, hits and misses later, Holliday celebrated a dramatic weight loss with 1991's R&B hit "I'm On Your Side." But years of unhappiness came to a head in the mid-1990s as she battled and successfully overcame a severe bout of depression. In 1996, a recurring role on FOX's "Ally McBeal" reestablished her with mainstream audiences.

"Dreamgirls" was revived on tour in 1994 and again in July of this year during the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta. In October, she celebrated her birthday by performing a benefit concert in New York City entitled "Romance in the Dark" in tribute to the great African American Broadway musicals. The event raised money for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. "I'm trying to bring some attention back to African American theatre which right now seems like it has somehow disappeared," Holliday said, "we should be on Broadway every year without question." On the big screen, she's belting out the blues and a little gospel in the recent film "The Rising Place" which stars Elise Neal.

Whether stage or screen, Holliday's gay and lesbian fans will always be right there, singing along and giving her glory.



Maurice Hines

ONE OF THE LAST LINKS TO THE OLD GLITTER IS STILL CARRYING ON

words by Stanley Bennett Clay

I called Lena Horne recently when my CD came out—and you know if she likes you because she curses—so I had sent my CD to her, and I hadn't heard from her. So I called from Chicago just to wish her Merry Christmas. Carl Craig answers the phone, and she hears my voice over the speaker. She calls out to Craig, 'By the way. . . .I heard the CD.' So I'm getting nervous because Lena will tell you the truth. Then she says: 'Tell that little motha-fucka he can sing!'"

With parts of six decades performing and hanging with some of the greats under his belt, Maurice Hines has plenty of these stories to tell about a golden age of showbiz that is all but gone save for the link he represents.

Maurice started his professional dancing career in 1954 at the age of 7. Partnered with his 5-year-old brother Gregory, the Hines kids, as they were known back then, were spotted by Dinah Washington and immediately hired to open for Ruth Brown at The Apollo Theater. Before they reached high school, they had traveled the world and had shared the stage with such legends as Count Basie, Judy Garland, and Ella Fitzgerald, to name a few. Such stars as Don Rickles and the late comedienne Totie Fields shunned them, fearful of the thunderous applause and standing ovations the pubescent opening act received everywhere they performed.

icons

Over the years Gregory gravitated toward Hollywood while Maurice held on to his classic jazz, tap, nightclub ,and Broadway roots. If some believe Maurice is not on celebrity par with his brother, he is not bothered. On the contrary, he is quite proud of his younger brother and quite proud of his own stellar accomplishments. This year alone the veteran entertainer has been very busy: he starred in the national touring company of Guys & Dolls; his CD, Maurice: I've Never Been In Love Before, an impeccably nuanced collection of jazz, standards and show tunes was re-released by Arbors Records; and his life story was commissioned for publication.

> "I just want it to be said that I was a good person who did the right thing, especially for my people. There have been opportunities to further my career by doing the wrong thing with regard to my people. But I was never about that."

Also this year, Maurice stepped behind the camera to direct his first film, a whodunit featuring gay detectives. "It ain't no low budget, it's no budget," he laughs. "All my friends are doing it for nothing. When we sell it, then everybody'll get paid. We're all looking out for each other."

Though Maurice is venturing into film, this die-hard New York native has no Hollywood desires and little faith in the Hollywood system. "I'm just doing this one movie," he says. "I don't think of myself as having a film career at all because I don't really like doing them. This happens to be a story I have to tell, and this has been in my life and in my world for the last nine years. I waited for Hollywood to do it and they weren't courageous enough, so I'm doing it myself.

"I don't see that much of a change in Hollywood. I think that some people will get the opportunity if they know how to play their role politically and keep their mouths shut about what's going on, because the bigger you get and the more things you accumulate, the more difficult it is for you to speak out." For Maurice Hines, however, not speaking out is not an option.

"I'm doing shows outside of America. I'm doing one in The Dominican Republic, I'm doing one in Cuba, and I'm doing one in Amsterdam. I wanted a worldwide career because I knew, since I was so political, that they would try to stop me in this country. I think we have a tendency to forget what devastates us as a people when something good happens for us like Halle Berry winning. We forget that Eartha Kitt was banned here in this country for 10 years [for reducing then first lady Ladybird Johnson to tears in The White House when Kitt expressed her strong opposition to the Vietnam War.] And if she didn't have an international career, she would be homeless. We forget what happens to us. I don't forget because they are the people that inspire methe Eartha Kitts, the Lena Hornes."

If anything has put a damper on Maurice's indomitable spirit, it would be the loss of his mother two years ago. It was Alma Hines, a shy and gentle woman who was not supposed to have children, who became, in her own words, "a cage of apes" when it came to her miracle sons. It was she who lovingly guided Maurice's and Gregory's careers from childhood to middle age.

"When I was getting ready to do my CD, I was practicing at my mother's house," Maurice recalls with a bittersweetness, "and she said, 'what's that thing you're doing with your voice?' And I said,'You mean 'riffing,' mother?' And she said 'yeah.' Then she said, 'you don't have any. Do the songs you know. You don't have no riffs. You know who your favorite singer is, Nat King Cole. You don't have to be him, but do his songs. Do his songs for your mother.' That's why there's so much love in it because I did it for my mother. Then the record company heard it and asked who was it, and when my manager told them it was me, they were shocked. They said, 'You mean Maurice Hines, the dancer, can sing like that?' So they immediately signed me. It was all a happy accident, engineered by my mother from the heavens.

"Losing [my mother] was very devastating to me and my brother. I just got an award from the Dance Educators of America for Lifetime

Continued on page 76

Dee Dee Bridgewater

A JAZZ ICON STEPS INTO A 'NEW' SPACE

words by G. B. Mann

Dee Dee Bridgewater. Picture the little girl trotted out by her mother to sing for guests. "Sing, baby." That's her. According to Bridgewater, she did so with gusto, never shying away. "From that young age, I always knew that I wanted to be a singing star," Bridgewater beamed. And how bright she shines.

After living in Paris for several years, she now calls Las Vegas home. That's where Venus caught up with her. Amid the intermittent clatter of workmen doing various renovations and repairs, we managed to get downright cozy. "Call me Dee Dee, please," she humbly requested.

continued on page 77

Dionne Warwick

40 YEARS, 60 ALBUMS & MORE TO COME

words by Michael K. Watts

Celebrating 40 years in the music business this year, legendary entertainer Dionne Warwick has given the world timeless songs and a lifetime of musical memories. It's amazing to ponder that Warwick has been saying a "little prayer," asking the "way to San Jose," and walking "on by" for 40 of her 61 years. But her numbers don't stop there.

Over 50 hit singles—two No. 1 hits and 12 Top 10 hits. 60 albums—one certified platinum and five certified gold. Five Grammy Awards and millions of loyal fans across the globe. How does she deliver so consistently? "Staying true to the people who have supported this career for this long," Warwick humbly explained, "and giving them hopefully what they are expecting of me. That's the secret."

A mother of two sons and a grandmother of five, Warwick's roots are firmly planted in her singing family, with sister Dee Dee Warwick and cousins Whitney Houston, Cissy Houston, and Leontyne Price. While studying at the Hartt College of Music, she regularly moonlighted as a session singer. Her weekends and holidays were often spent in New York, where she met award-winning songwriting duo Burt Bacharach and Hal David. Their graduation gift to her was her first hit, "Don't Make Me Over" in 1962. Together, they collaborated on a string of hits over the next ten years, including "Walk On By," "Message to Michael," "Alfie," and "The Windows of the World." "The music that Bacharach, David, and Warwick made will outlive all of us because they represent not only the fabric of our lives but so many lives," Warwick pointed out. And the hits, gold records, and awards just kept coming.

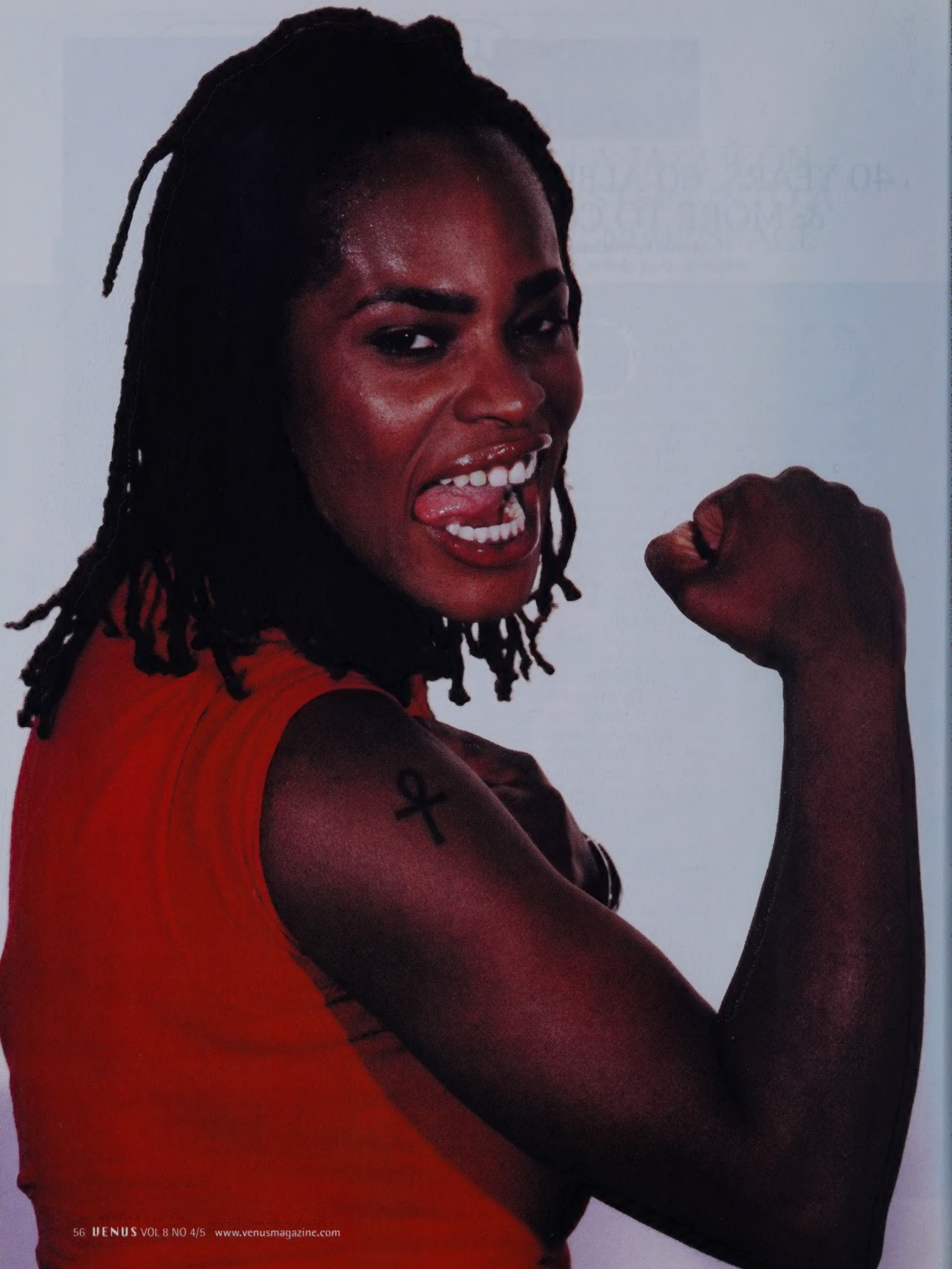
Dubbed "the voice that bridged the gap," Warwick is considered a pioneer as one of the first artists to cross over and appeal to mainstream audiences. Songs like "I Say a Little Prayer" and the Grammy Award-winning "Do You Know the Way to San Jose" remain indelibly stamped in the hearts of her fans today. Some of Warwick's more famous fans have remade her songs and made them their own, as in Luther Vandross' "A House is Not a Home."

Speaking of homes, the Dionne Warwick Design Group has designed commercial and residential spaces for the world's elite, including Warwick's own home in Brazil. "It's my stress-free country. It's just where I need to be right now," Warwick serenely offered. She splits her time between Brazil and her native New Jersey where her mother still lives.

Warwick has been highly recognized as a constant force in the entertainment industry: hosting the hit TV show *Solid Gold* in the 1980s; participating in the unprecedented "We Are the World" and "That's What Friends Are For" benefit recordings; and completing a successful stint as host of the Psychic Friends Network. Often unnoticed are Warwick's dedicated humanitarian efforts for many causes, including the fight against AIDS. "I've been given so much [that] I find it very easy to give back," the gracious Warwick said.

In the future Warwick will be required to give even more of her time to charitable organizations to satisfy an agreement that kept her out of jail. On May 12 of this year, Warwick was arrested at the Miami International Airport and charged for possession of less than 5 grams of marijuana. "Entertainers are sometimes placed in vulnerable situations which are completely beyond their control. To this day, I am still puzzled as to what happened to me in the Miami Airport," Warwick said in a statement to the press. Charges were later dropped in exchange for a charitable donation and participation in anti-drug announcements. Warwick also agreed to complete a drug treatment program.

Meanwhile, big plans are under way for Warwick to commemorate her 40 years in a 40-song duets album entitled *My Friends and Me* due this fall. She's brought in the best in the business—Luther Vandross, Roberta Flack, James Ingram—to recreate the magic of songs that have touched so many for 40 years.



Power of the Pitch

Film Writer Maisha Yearwood has Hollywood in the Palm of Her Hand

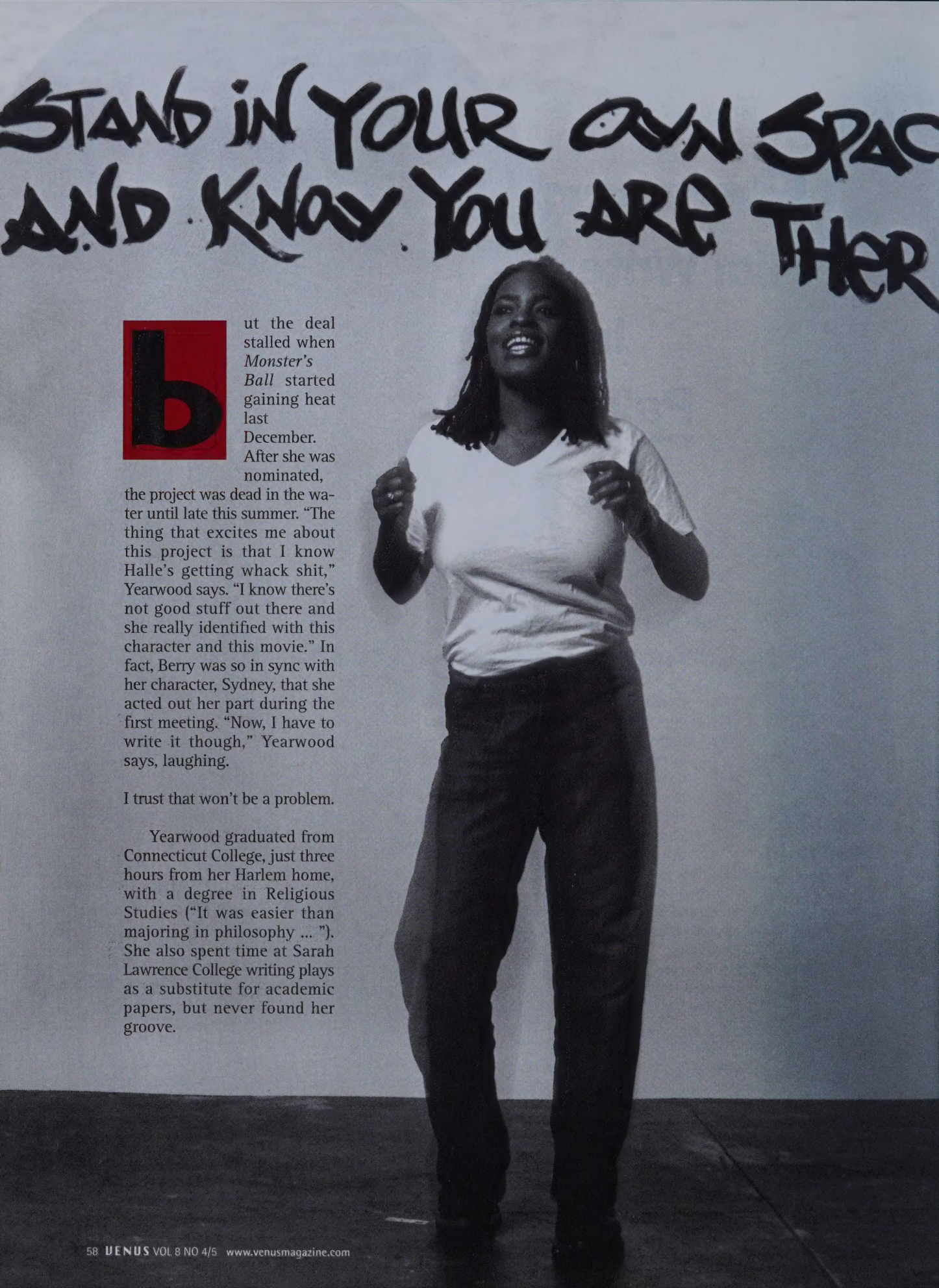
words by Anderson Jones

I'm not sure, but I have a feeling I don't have Maisha Yearwood's complete attention.

It's not that she isn't maintaining eye contact, laughing at my lame jokes or answering my questions thoroughly and with a frankness uncommon among most Hollywood industry types, she's just ... distracted. Every once and a while I catch her eyes darting past me, but I'm afraid to follow her gaze. I pretend not to notice. Instead, I learn quickly that the 29-year-old woman with natural dreds tickling the tops of her shoulders covered with a bright red California T-shirt, is uncommon.

Less than four years after leaving AFI's Film School, Yearwood shares a tiny table with me at the Silverlake java joint, The Coffee Table. She's already sold three sitcom ideas, a movie of the week, and three feature films—all on the strength of her legendary pitches. "I try to make them see the movie," she says of her 30-minute performance pieces. "It's almost like telling one long joke." Her first feature film to sell, a raucous, modestly budgeted comedy called *Where's the Party At?*, which follows an out-of-control bachelorette party, found a home at Artisan and Ice Cube's production house, Cubevision. News of her deal with Artisan broke in *Variety*, the daily industry bible, on her last day as a temp at Disney, where she passed the time checking DVDs for flaws. "And the moment that article came out," Yearwood recalls, "no one ever treated me the same again. You could see they weren't looking at me the same way." By the end of the day, her colleagues were feting her new fame with champagne and cake. "It was wild," Yearwood laughs. "I was like damn, no one wanted to talk to me before."

Another sold pitch waiting in the wings is called *Beauty School Dropout*, a female version of *Barbershop* with a *Hairspray* twist. A young, white Detroit woman wants to become the best Black hairstylist in the city and enters the mother of all hair shows. Lord, help her. But the next Yearwood pitch-come-feature to go into production will probably be *The Two-Year Mark*, a romantic comedy that has Halle Berry attached. Fox will produce. Yearwood will begin writing the script any day now. Although Berry got on board early, her Academy Award-winning run almost sunk the picture before it got off the ground. Yearwood pitched the movie, which examines love and class issues between an uptown girl and her way, way uptown boyfriend—and I mean Harlem, not the Upper West Side—to Berry last fall.



But the deal stalled when *Monster's Ball* started gaining heat last December. After she was nominated, the project was dead in the water until late this summer. "The thing that excites me about this project is that I know Halle's getting whack shit," Yearwood says. "I know there's not good stuff out there and she really identified with this character and this movie." In fact, Berry was so in sync with her character, Sydney, that she acted out her part during the first meeting. "Now, I have to write it though," Yearwood says, laughing.

I trust that won't be a problem.

Yearwood graduated from Connecticut College, just three hours from her Harlem home, with a degree in Religious Studies ("It was easier than majoring in philosophy ... "). She also spent time at Sarah Lawrence College writing plays as a substitute for academic papers, but never found her groove.

"I was very bitter. I wished it was the '50s and I didn't have to go, because I didn't like school," she says. "It was one of the advantages of being Fonzie. I would work as a mechanic or something." Disillusioned with school but inspired by the movies, she relocated to the Left Coast to attend UCLA's Film School, then transferred to AFI to ride the coattails of her idol, filmmaker Julie Dash.

"The thing that cemented the deal for me was *Daughters of the Dust*," Yearwood remembers. Up to that point, she was pretty sure she'd become a soap opera writer ("How hard could it be? It's all dialogue, all drama."). "I saw it the summer before my senior year in college. Film had never occurred to me as an option. I had never seen people of color in a movie like that. It was like what Steven Spielberg is for a lot of these white guys in film school. I can put images of Black women on film."

Yearwood made her first successful pitch to her mother, who worked as a producer on *The Cosby Show*. Earlier, she came out to her family while attending Sarah Lawrence and experienced little drama. "The environment at that school supported being different," she says. "When you come out to your family, a part of you dies—how they see you and think about you in terms of your future. It has to die because that's not who you are anymore." The Yearwood household supported individuality. Yearwood calls herself the dyke chick; one brother, who could model, runs a Web design company and only wears Armani or Calvin; another brother is a jock now working in finance; her gorgeous sister lives in L.A., as well, and Yearwood calls her a real "around-the-way girl." Her siblings were the characters in a sitcom Yearwood sold her mother, who got

"I was the girl in high school who was obviously gay."

her a meeting with Warner Bros., but she pitched alone and sold it on her first try. "What white people call luck, Black people call being blessed," says Yearwood, with a sigh. "I am very blessed."

continued on page 76

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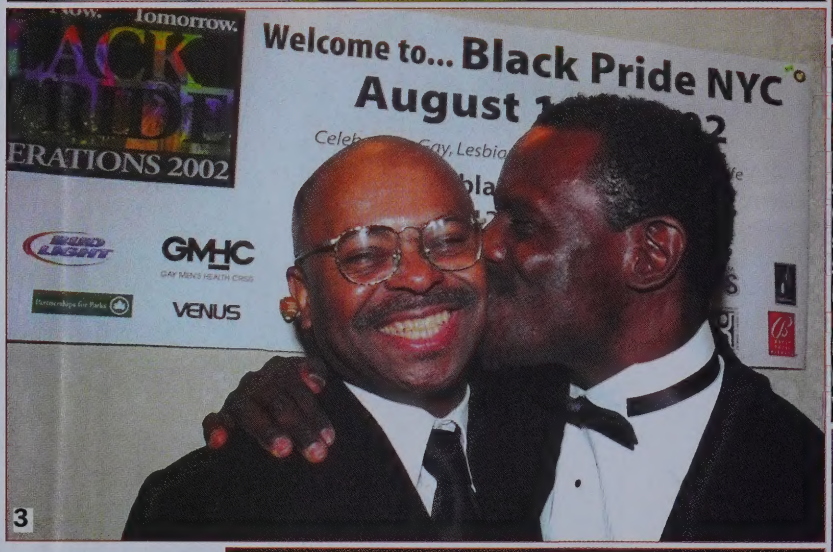
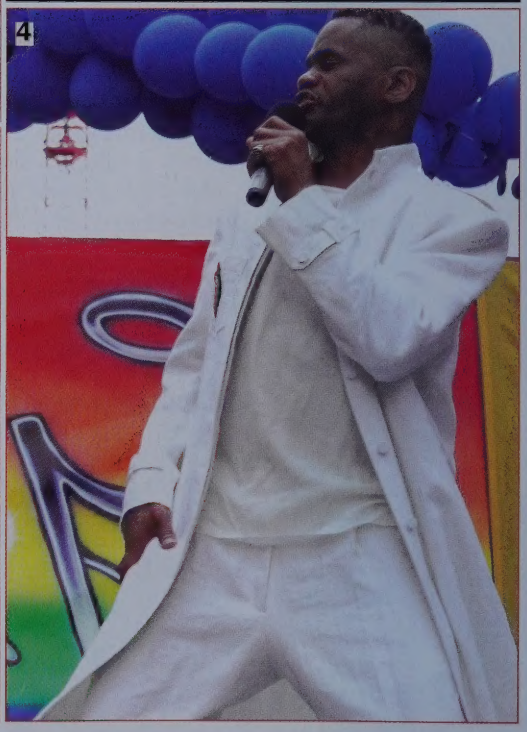


1. [l-r] Tita Gray, Executive Director of Black Pride NYC, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, and NYC Pride Founder James Saunders open the awards ceremony at the Brooklyn Marriot 2. Thelma Houston *feelin' it* on stage at the historic Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street. 3. Calvin Clark smacks some brotha-ly love on the cheek of James Saunders 4. Colonel Abrams turns it out at PrideFest 2002 in the Village 5. The lovely Lydia Lee Love is all smiles with Deepa Soul at PrideFest. Special THANKS to Black Pride NYC producer Lawrence Pickney, [not pictured.] You worked it boy!



Doug Meszler 1-3 Tina Paul 4,5

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Hotter Than July Pride in the Motor City

Jason Michael

The Annual Billionaire Boy's Club Brunch during the Hotter Than July Weekend brought together hundreds of pride participants including [l to r] Bryan Philpot-Program Director for National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum [NBLGLF]; Roosevelt Mosby NBLGLF Board of Directors; June Washington Detroit Black Gay Pride Inc [DBGP]. Former Director; and Johnny Jenkins Jr. DBGP Inc., Co-Founder, President-Director.

Pride in Alabama

The Walker County Alabama Committee presented Elizabeth Birch, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign [HRC] with its annual Medgar Evers Civil Rights Award. This is the 4th year of this award. Previous winners have been Alabama State, Senator, Roger Smithersman and the former NAACP Walker CountyPresident, Willie Moore. The award recognizes a person who has made outstanding civil rights contribution in the fields of religion, education or politics. The Rev. David Lewis, r, who presented the award, is no stranger to human rights. He is an openly gay minister in the State of Alabama. He was the first African American to be named Alabama honorary state treasurer in 2001. He has spoken on gay rights issues at University of Alabama, Yale University, Columbia University, Penn State University, and the University of Florida to name a few. He is assistant pastor of the St. Johns Missionary Baptist Church in Dora Alabama. He preaches tolerance and understanding of gays and lesbians.

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-- Hector, Juan, Marlon, Eric

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Chicago

Windy City Pride's 1st Prize Poetry Slam winner, T'ai Freedom Ford, c, went back to her native Brooklyn, NY $750 richer after rhyming past the competition last summer. Pride producer Thayer L. Johnson, left, and Slam producer CC Carter, right, presented the check.

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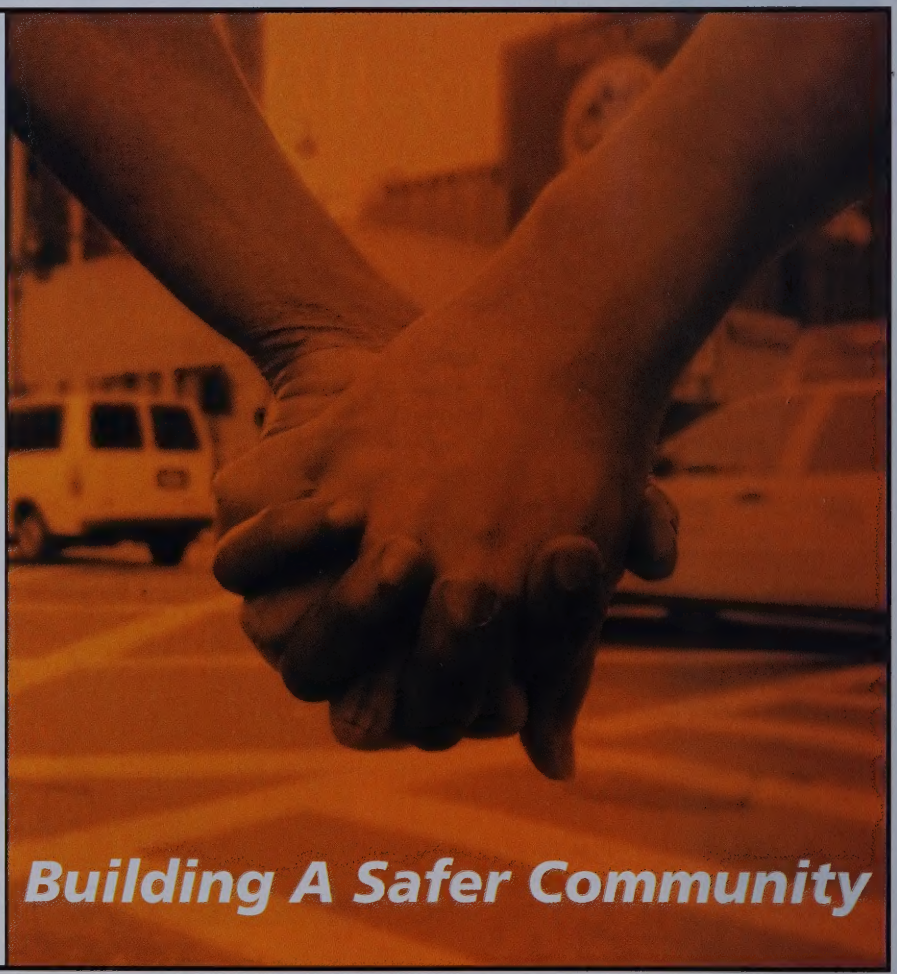

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Some Call Me a Survivor

by Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

Kwabena Rainey Cheeks has been doing battle with HIV for two decades. He's winning.

Some call me a survivor because I am a black 49—year—old gay man that got through the public school system living in Washington, DC. Oh yes, I have survived racism, classism and homophobia, and, on top of all of that, I have been HIV positive since 1984. Some say I have AIDS; that depends on which month you check.
Yes, I AM A SURVIVOR! As the song says,
"Ain't got time to die."
– Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

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   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

2. **The kind or amount of moderate activities you can do, like moving a table, or carrying groceries.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

3. **Walking uphill or climbing a few flights of stairs.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

4. **Eating, dressing, bathing, or cooking a meal.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

5. **Your social activities, like visiting with friends and family.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

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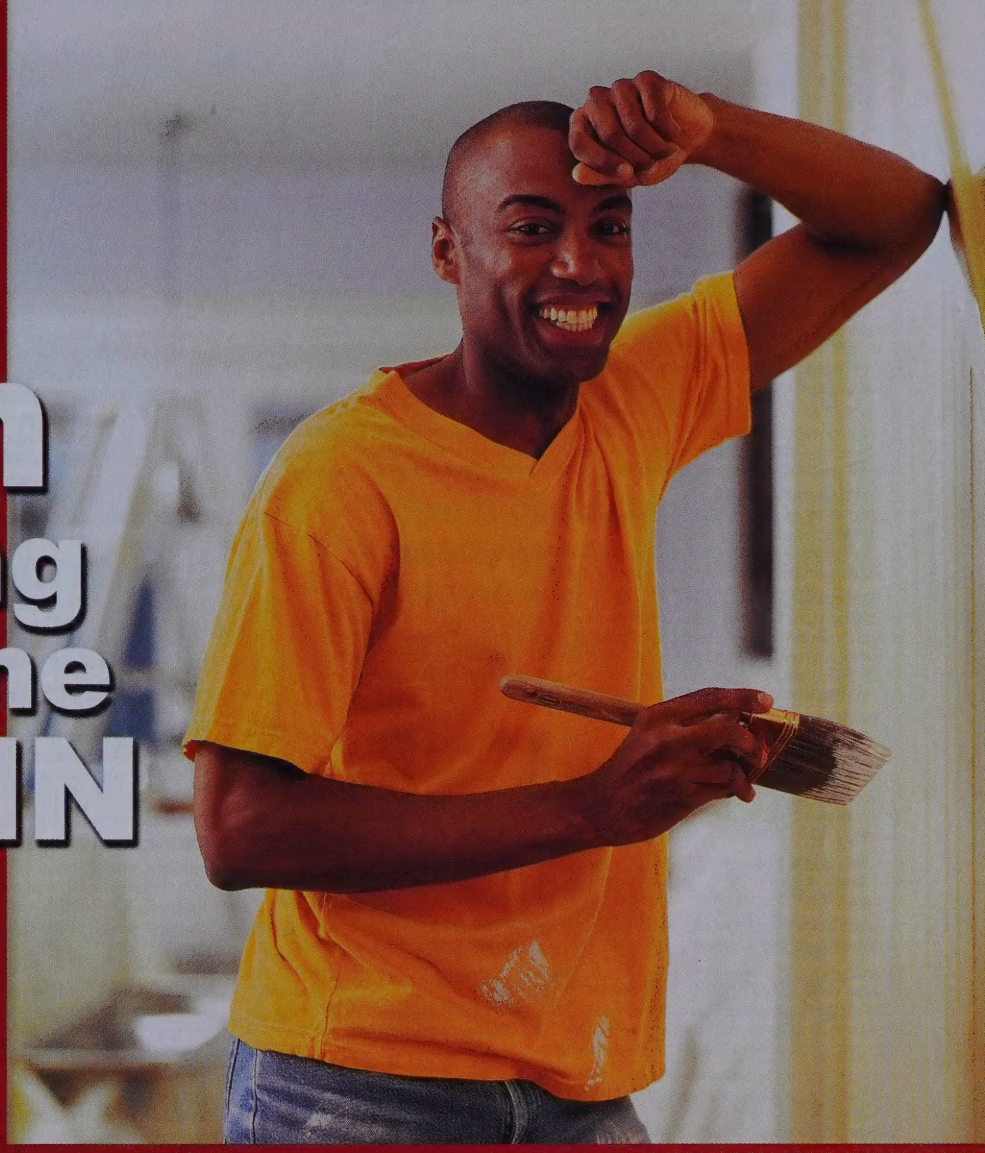

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PROCRIT is contraindicated in patients with:

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The safety and efficacy of PROCRIT therapy have not been established in patients with a known history of a seizure disorder or underlying hematologic disease (eg, sickle cell anemia, myelodysplastic syndromes, or hypercoagulable disorders).

In some female patients, menses have resumed following PROCRIT therapy; the possibility of pregnancy should be discussed and the need for contraception evaluated.

Hematology: Exacerbation of porphyria has been observed rarely in patients with chronic renal failure (CRF) treated with PROCRIT. However, PROCRIT has not caused increased urinary excretion of porphyrin metabolites in normal volunteers, even in the presence of a rapid erythropoietic response. Nevertheless, PROCRIT should be used with caution in patients with known porphyria.

In preclinical studies in dogs and rats, but not in monkeys, PROCRIT therapy was associated with subclinical bone marrow fibrosis. Therefore, zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients should have HCT measured once a week (QW) until HCT has been stabilized, and measured periodically thereafter.

Delayed or Diminished Response: If the patient fails to respond or to maintain a response to doses within the recommended dosing range, the following etiologies should be considered and evaluated: 1) Iron deficiency: Virtually all patients will eventually require supplemental iron therapy (see Iron Evaluation). 2) Underlying infectious, inflammatory, or malignant processes. 3) Occult blood loss. 4) Underlying hematologic diseases (ie, thalassemia, refractory anemia, or other myelodysplastic disorders). 5) Vitamin deficiencies: folic acid or vitamin B12. 6) Hemolysis. 7) Aluminum intoxication. 8) Osteitis fibrosa cystica.

Iron Evaluation: During PROCRIT therapy, absolute or functional iron deficiency may develop. Functional iron deficiency, with normal ferritin levels but low transferrin saturation, is presumably due to the inability to mobilize iron stores rapidly enough to support increased erythropoiesis. Transferrin saturation should be at least 20% and ferritin should be at least 100 ng/mL.

Prior to and during PROCRIT therapy, the patient's iron status, including transferrin saturation (serum iron divided by iron binding capacity) and serum ferritin, should be evaluated. Virtually all patients will eventually require supplemental iron to increase or maintain transferrin saturation to levels which will adequately support erythropoiesis stimulated by PROCRIT.

Drug Interactions: No evidence of interaction of PROCRIT with other drugs was observed in the course of clinical trials.

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: Carcinogenic potential of PROCRIT has not been evaluated. PROCRIT does not induce bacterial gene mutation (Ames Test), chromosomal aberrations in mammalian cells, micronuclei in mice, or gene mutation at the HGPRT locus. In female rats treated intravenously (IV) with PROCRIT, there was a trend for slightly increased fetal wastage at doses of 100 and 500 U/kg.

Pregnancy Category C: PROCRIT has been shown to have adverse effects in rats when given in doses 5 times the human dose. There are no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. PROCRIT should be used during pregnancy only if potential benefit justifies the potential risk to the fetus.

In studies in female rats, there were decreases in body weight gain, delays in appearance of abdominal hair, delayed eyelid opening, delayed ossification, and decreases in the number of caudal vertebrae in the F1 fetuses of the 500 U/kg group. In female rats treated IV, there was a trend for slightly increased fetal wastage at doses of 100 and 500 U/kg.

Nursing Mothers: Postnatal observations of the live offspring (F1 generation) of female rats treated with PROCRIT during gestation and lactation revealed decreases in body weight gain, delays in appearance of abdominal hair, eyelid opening, and decreases in the number of caudal vertebrae in the F1 fetuses of the 500 U/kg group. It is not known whether PROCRIT is excreted in human milk. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk, caution should be exercised when PROCRIT is administered to a nursing woman.

Pediatric Use: See WARNINGS, Pediatric Use.

Pediatric HIV-Infected Patients: Published literature has reported the use of PROCRIT in 20 zidovudine-treated anemic HIV-infected pediatric patients ages 8 months to 17 years, treated with 50 to 400 U/kg subcutaneously (SC) or IV, 2 to 3 times per week (BIW to TIW). Increases in hemoglobin levels and in reticulocyte counts, and decreases in or elimination of blood transfusions were observed.

Hypertension: Exacerbation of hypertension has not been observed in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients treated with PROCRIT. However, PROCRIT should be withheld in these patients if preexisting hypertension is uncontrolled, and should not be started until blood pressure (BP) is controlled. In double-blind studies, a single seizure has been experienced by a patient treated with PROCRIT.

ADVERSE REACTIONS

Adverse events reported in clinical trials with PROCRIT in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients were consistent with the progression of HIV infection. In double-blind, placebo-controlled studies of 3-months duration involving approximately 300 zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients, adverse events with an incidence of ≥10% in either patients treated with PROCRIT or placebo-treated patients were:

Percent of Patients Reporting Event: Event followed by Patients Treated With PROCRIT (N=144) first, Placebo-Treated Patients (N=153) second:
Pyrexia 38%, 29%; Fatigue 25%, 31%; Headache 19%, 14%; Cough 18%, 14%; Diarrhea 16%, 18%; Rash 16%, 8%; Congestion, Respiratory 15%, 10%; Nausea 15%, 12%; Shortness of Breath 14%, 13%; Asthenia 11%, 14%; Skin Reaction (Administration Site) 10%, 7%; Dizziness 9%, 10%.

There were no statistically significant differences between treatment groups in the incidence of the above events.

In the 297 patients studied, PROCRIT was not associated with significant increases in opportunistic infections or mortality. In 71 patients from this group treated with PROCRIT at 150 U/kg TIW, serum p24 antigen levels did not appear to increase. Preliminary data showed no enhancement of HIV replication in infected cell lines in vitro.

Peripheral white blood cell and platelet counts are unchanged following PROCRIT therapy.

Allergic Reactions: Two zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients had urticarial reactions within 48 hours of their first exposure to study medication. One patient was treated with PROCRIT and one was treated with placebo (PROCRIT vehicle alone). Both patients had positive immediate skin tests against their study medication with a negative saline control. The basis for this apparent preexisting hypersensitivity to components of the PROCRIT formulation is unknown, but may be related to HIV-induced immunosuppression or prior exposure to blood products.

Seizures: In double-blind and open-label trials of PROCRIT in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients, 10 patients have experienced seizures. In general, these seizures appear to be related to underlying pathology such as meningitis or cerebral neoplasms, not PROCRIT therapy.

OVERDOSAGE

The maximum amount of PROCRIT that can be safely administered in single or multiple doses has not been determined. Doses of up to 1500 U/kg TIW for 3 to 4 weeks have been administered to adults without any direct toxic effects of PROCRIT itself. Therapy with PROCRIT can result in polycythemia if the HCT is not carefully monitored and the dose appropriately adjusted. If the suggested target range is exceeded, PROCRIT may be temporarily withheld until the HCT returns to the suggested target range; PROCRIT therapy may then be resumed using a lower dose (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). If polycythemia is of concern, phlebotomy may be indicated to decrease the HCT.

DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

Prior to beginning PROCRIT, it is recommended that the endogenous serum erythropoietin level be determined (prior to transfusion). Available evidence suggests that patients receiving zidovudine with endogenous serum erythropoietin levels >500 mU/mL are unlikely to respond to therapy with PROCRIT.

Starting Dose: For adult patients with serum erythropoietin levels ≤500 mU/mL who are receiving a dose of zidovudine ≤4200 mg/week, the recommended starting dose of PROCRIT is 100 U/kg as an IV or SC injection TIW for 8 weeks. For pediatric patients, see PRECAUTIONS, Pediatric Use.

Increase Dose: During the dose adjustment phase of therapy, the HCT should be monitored weekly. If the response is not satisfactory in terms of reducing transfusion requirements or increasing HCT after 8 weeks of therapy, the dose of PROCRIT can be increased by 50-100 U/kg TIW. Response should be evaluated every 4-8 weeks thereafter and the dose adjusted accordingly by 50-100 U/kg increments TIW. If patients have not responded satisfactorily to a PROCRIT dose of 300 U/kg TIW, it is unlikely that they will respond to higher doses of PROCRIT.

Maintenance Dose: After attainment of the desired response (ie, reduced transfusion requirements or increased HCT), the dose of PROCRIT should be titrated to maintain the response based on factors such as variations in zidovudine dose and the presence of intercurrent infectious or inflammatory episodes. If the HCT exceeds 40%, the dose should be discontinued until the HCT drops to 36%. The dose should be reduced by 25% when treatment is resumed and then titrated to maintain the desired HCT.

STORAGE

Store at 2° to 8°C (36° to 46°F). Do not freeze or shake.

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ORTHO BIOTECH

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December 2000 638-29-979-9BH

When you're living with or threatened by the virus.

Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

I have been in the hospital three times. The first time, in 1990, I was told I would never walk and that I would be dead by Christmas. I asked the doctor who told him this, and he answered, simply, "This is my professional opinion." Everyone has a turning point in his or her life, something that says give up and die or fight back. And at that moment in 1990, I had to make a choice: agree with his professional opinion, lie down, wait for Christmas and die, or, get up and do something that would make things count. If I did die at Christmas, at least I would have made a mark — at least someone would know my name. So I stopped worrying about dying. Death does not scare me. The truth is everyone is going to face it. All that is important is what we do while we are here. I love life, so I make every moment count for something.

I believe adversity comes into our lives just to help us discover what we truly believe. Do you believe more in the problems or your ability to solve them? Do you believe more in your fear or your faith? I personally believe in God, and my God has prepared me for any and every thing. So the choice of what to believe in is mine — and if I don't have the answer, I know how to find it.

To survive in this world, we have to first believe that we are worth being here, that our lives count. We must love ourselves so much that we won't let anyone or anything take us out. When I look back over my life, and think of the things I have overcome this far, how can I give up? When that's not enough, I think about my ancestors and what they had to survive. My mother never had a computer or a 401k plan. She didn't have a car; she could not even drive. But she worked two jobs everyday, volunteered in the public school for over 20 years and raised 6 children and 8 grand children. She was an ordinary black women — a survivor.

When I think about what my mother did with what she had, there is no way I can even think about giving up. Does that mean things are any easier for me? Has racism or classism or homophobia or any of the other "isms" been removed for my world? Not at all, that's not the question or the problem. The question is what am I willing to get up and do about it.

> **"When it comes to your survival, say yes to life! Let go of anyone and anything that does not support you."**

You have a choice. You can be on the sideline or in the game. You can always find a reason not to do something – we all do from time to time. But when it comes to your survival, say yes to life! Let go of anyone and anything that does not support you. I know this is not as easy as it sounds, but if it is worth having, it's worth fighting for. The challenge is finding your passion — what makes you happy, what brings you joy — and going for it.

Too often we think of survivors as people that have climbed some exceptionally great mountain, or have crossed some unimaginable ocean. But we all have mountains to climb and rivers to cross in our lives. Before David fought Goliath, he said, I have fought loins and bears, what is a giant? So the next time your Goliath is ready to fight, remember you have already fought lions and bears. Get up and go do battle! The next time you are looking for the survivor, just go to the mirror and look in your own eyes, you will see the greatest survivor of them all — yourself.

About the Author: Kwabena Rainey Cheeks was a founding member of the Unity Fellowship Church Movement, and has been an HIV/AIDS and LGBT issues activist for more than 20 years. He currently ministers to people living with HIV/AIDS and the African American LGBT community in Washington, D.C.

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Congresswoman Barbara Lee: Heiress to the Black Progressive Throne

words by Kai Wright

BlackAIDS.org U.S. Editor Kai Wright talks with the Bay Area's firebrand representative in the U.S. House.

It's about fighting terrorism, yes. It's also about resources for HIV and AIDS, for housing, for education, for all of those efforts that were challenges before 9/11 and should remain on our agenda subsequent to 9/11. ... That is the challenge for us as progressives, as people of color, as African Americans in the United States Congress. We must make sure that our agenda remains central to the national debate on resources.
— Rep. Lee on the federal budget

When Democrat Barbara Lee stormed into the U.S. House as the representative for California's 9th District in 1998, she had big shoes to fill. The district, centered in Berkley and Oakland, had been represented by progressive icon Ron Dellums since 1970, and its historically radical constituents had come to expect a certain level of national rabblerousing on their behalf. Black America at large had also long counted Dellums among its most trusted national leaders — and as the community's first line of defense on Capitol Hill.

But Lee, who had previously spent more than 10 years as a Dellums advisor, proved more than capable of keeping the Bay Area's political fires burning. After finishing out the retiring Dellums' term, she won re-election with 82 percent of the vote in 1999. In the few short years since then, she's catapulted herself into a national and international leadership role within both African American and progressive communities. And from her seat on the House International Relations Committee, she has stood as one of Congress' most vocal agitators on the topic of U.S. support for international AIDS efforts. In late June, she took a break from the House's debates over prescription drug coverage for seniors and spoke with BlackAIDS.org about the Bush administration's record on AIDS, federal budget priorities, and the growing debate over HIV prevention strategies for young people.

Wright: Let's start with talking about the Bush administration a little bit. We're about a year and a half into the administration. Some folks have been critical of their record on HIV and AIDS. Others have said you know they don' t have the staff they need, we can't be too critical yet. Others have said they're doing a great job. What would you say about where we're at? How would you rate the Bush administration thus far?

Rep. Lee: First, let me say that this is the greatest pandemic of all time. And I believe that the Bush administration has not moved quick enough with their strategy and their initiative. Of course, we're supporting [an appropriation of] one billion dollars with the Global AIDS Fund, which we actually established through legislation that Congressman Leach [R-Iowa] and myself introduced and was signed into law. It is the Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act of 2000.

Well, it has taken a while just to gear up the United States participation in that effort. And now we still do not see a major financial commitment on behalf of the United States to this fund. And I believe that we must work very hard with the administration to get them to understand the fact that this Global Fund is a fund that would allow for the leveraging of nine to ten billion dollars a year —which is what [United Nations Secretary General] Kofi Annan has indicated we need to just begin to make a dent in this. So I believe there's a large learning curve that's taking place. And that, while the administration is at least saying that they're committed to addressing the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, that they really do have to put their money where their mouth is. And so far we have not seen that financial commitment.

Wright: What about that same question for your colleagues in Congress? As a body, how do you think you guys have done this session so far on HIV?

Lee: Well, I think that on a bipartisan basis — you know, I've worked with Congressman Hyde [R-Ill.] and Congressman Lantos [D-Calif.], and we actually passed an authorization bill. There was, I believe, $750 million for the Global Fund, and the total I believe was over a billion dollars. So I believe that members of Congress are beginning to see the real emergency nature of this pandemic. But quite frankly the appropriations process has been fairly disappointing, because I believe this year only $200 million was appropriated [Congress first authorizes and then appropriates all federal spending]. And, again, we tried for at least $500 million in appropriations on our side. So it's moving too slowly for me, too slowly for people who are living and dying. And I think that the United States Congress must make this a priority. I see that more members of congress are beginning to discuss HIV and AIDS, to talk about their outrage at what has resulted, and also are beginning to want to work to do something. But I don't see, yet, quite the major push that I think we need.

Wright: What's the problem on the appropriations end? There've been a few efforts, most recently with the emergency supplemental funding bills, to get that Global AIDS Fund money up. Why hasn't it been successful so far? And also, what's the next step in that process?

Lee: Well, you know, the president has indicated that he doesn't want to put too much money until he sees how effective the programs are, where the money's going, that the money is actually being used for what it should be used. But what I say is: How can you be effective and how can we really begin to impact this pandemic unless you put the money out there and allow these initiatives to work? So it's a catch-22. You hear members of Congress saying, 'Oh yes, yes, yes. We want do this. But we want see how these few dollars are going to work first.' And I'm saying come on, that's not very realistic. And I think that's very dangerous, because while we're around measuring results people are dying. This is something that we must invest in at the same time that we're working to measure results and change strategies as we see they need to be changed. Put money

Congresswoman Barbara Lee

where we know it will work. And there are some proven initiatives —look at Uganda. There are countries that have models of success. So we —I believe that we can't wait to see how these few dollars are going to impact the pandemic before we put more money in it. I just think that's a cop out.

Wright: The White House recently announced one initiative that they are taking, this $500 million for focusing on mother to child transmissions in sub-Saharan Africa, and I believe actually globally. You reacted less than enthusiastically to that proposal. Why wasn't that good? What was the problem with that?

Lee: Well, first, yes we want to see more money in mother to child transmission efforts. But number one, this is not new money. Contrary to what they're saying, they're robbing Peter to pay Paul. And that's outrageous given the enormous trillions of dollars in tax cuts that this country has provided for the wealthy. You know, we need new money. Secondly, it's not enough, and it had no impact in terms of resources into the Global Fund. And I just think it's a good message to send. I think the policy direction and the raising of awareness about the desperate need to put resources into to mother to child transmission makes a lot of sense. But clearly this is not a billion dollars, and this is not new money, and this is not a comprehensive perspective on the pandemic. We need prevention, treatment, education, care, vaccine development —we need a multifaceted approach to this pandemic. And so by looking at one strategy and not the entire way to approach this, the interrelatedness of these — the way you approach HIV and AIDS, as I said earlier: prevention, education, treatment, care and vaccine. I think it's just looking at a piece of the problem.

Wright: On the domestic front, we're similarly facing flat funding for a number of programs — ADAP, the Minority AIDS Initiative. Do you know, are there efforts within Congress now to boost those spending bills before they reach [fiscal year 2003]? And how do they fare if so?

Lee: We're working very hard with the Appropriations Committee to try to increase this level of funding, because flat funding certainly is not acceptable given the nature of the pandemic in our communities of color here in America. I mean this is a global pandemic, and we work at this on the Hill in that perspective: it's domestic, it's international, it's global. And we're working very hard with Congresswoman Christian-Christenson [D-Virgin Islands] to try to increase the resources for the domestic minority initiatives also.

Wright: For all of these funding conversations, there is a perspective that says: We're facing a faltering economy, we're facing what's being described as a war on terror, we have this crisis with Medicare, can we really expect —indeed, can we really afford, as a nation —to spend more on these sorts of things at a time like this?

Lee: Well the Bush administration somehow found a way to afford a two trillion dollar tax cut. They found a way to afford a huge increase in the military budget, close to $400 billion. Much of this related to weapons systems to fight a cold war that doesn't exist. So it's about priorities. It's about fighting terrorism, yes. It's also about resources for HIV and AIDS, for housing, for education, for all of those efforts that were challenges before 9/11 and should remain on our agenda subsequent to 9/11. We continue to fight the budget priority fight in Congress, and I think that is the challenge for us as progressives, as people of color, as African Americans in the United States Congress. We must make sure that our agenda remains central to the national debate on resources.

Wright: Finally, you've also been a part of this prevention debate, in terms of abstinence-only versus comprehensive sex education and how we deal with young people and HIV prevention. And you have a bill, that I believe has already been introduced, that's seeking funding for comprehensive sex education. Can you tell me a little bit about what that bill is seeking to accomplish and why we need it?

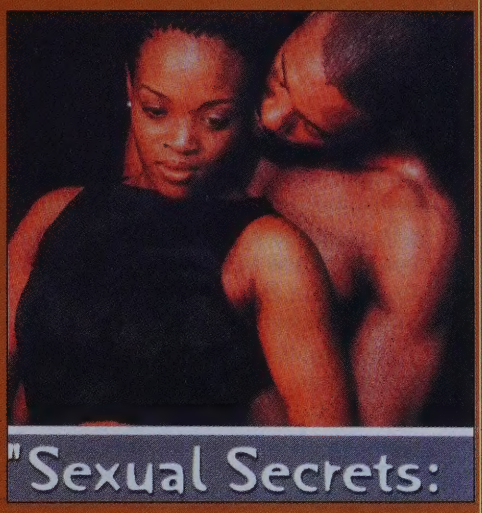
Lee: Sure. You know in the 1996 pan of welfare reform laws somehow —and I wasn't here

Continued on page 75

Listen Up Sistahs!

Don't Be in Denial About Your Down Low Man

Calling ALL Sistahs! Yes, even women in the life [because surveys show that many black 'lesbians' are still having sex, every now and then, with a man.]



The Danger of Life on the "Down Low"

by Rennetta Mulkey and Kozetta Jane Harris

Every now and then we may hear whispers about a male friend, family member, church member or co-worker who is "living on the down low". Men "on the down low" are self-identified heterosexuals who enjoy having sex with other men. Men on the down low profess to love women and are often married or in committed relationships with a woman. While women may hold their heart, their sexual desire for men is strong enough to pull them into a dual life, one of secrecy, deception and danger. Not the cloak and dagger danger found in Bond movies, but the danger that comes from exposing themselves and the women in their lives to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV.

One out of every 160 Black women is living with HIV and of those who contract the virus through heterosexual sex, an unknown number were unknowingly at an increased risk because their partners were secretly having unprotected sex with men.

Picture this. Linda and Tyrone are happily married with children. One day their son Tyrone is involved in a car accident while being driven to a pee-wee football game by a family friend. Tyrone senior and Linda rush to the hospital. While their son is being treated in the ER, a nurse suggests that they donate blood. They both readily agree to the minor procedure hoping that their efforts will help save their son or another child. Thankfully, their son is not critically injured. Tyrone and Linda are noticeably relieved by the news but notice that a look of concern remains on the faces of the doctor and nurses treating their son.

After Lil' T is moved to a hospital room for observation, a nurse pulls Tyrone aside to tell him that his blood tested positive for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, HIV. Months pass before Tyrone is able to tell Linda that he is HIV+. Linda listens to the news, not believing what her husband was so reluctantly tells her. She is inconsolable.

Her marriage, she believed, was a good one. Tyrone is an exemplary father, a good provider...a good man. She moves through each day as if in a daze, not understanding how this could have happened to her, to her family.

Tyrone vehemently denies stepping out with another woman. Linda is angry and confused. How else could this have happened? Repeatedly she accuses Tyrone of messing around, of using drugs – the only ways that she knows he can get such a dreaded disease. Finally, Tyrone admits to "kickin it" with several of his "boys" throughout, and before, their marriage. He assures her that he is not gay, that he loves her and does not want to break up their family.

Unfortunately, this scenario isn't as far-fetched as many would like to believe. According to some, living on the down low is far from rare in the Black community. Some suggest that many Black men choose this road because they are afraid to be identified as gay, knowing that homophobia (a hatred for or prejudice against gays) is openly expressed in our community.

Listen Up Sistahs!

Others believe that these men are in denial about their sexuality and refuse to fully embrace it. They use their relationships with women to distract themselves, temporarily, from their desire for men. While both reasons can be true, neither addresses the repercussions of irresponsible sexual behavior; the impact upon Black families, Black children and the overall strength of the Black community.

Ultimately, whether Tyrone had a sexual affair with a man or a woman, is not the issue. While Tyrone's decision to cheat on his wife can cause irreparable damage to his marriage, his decision not to practice safer sex in his liaisons with other men has jeopardized Linda's life, as well as his own.

By now, everyone knows that HIV is not a "gay disease". But what many still do not appreciate is that HIV can be transmitted during unprotected sex with a woman or with a man, in a seemingly committed relationship or in a casual hook-up. The simple fact is that anyone having unprotected sex, whether oral, vaginal or anal, is at risk of getting or passing the virus.

Women need to question their potential partner about his sexual history before the relationship turned sexual. It was suggested that questions should not only center around how many women, or men, their man has slept with, but also if he had multiple partners at one period, if he regularly practiced safer sex, and if he has been faithful in past committed relationships.

If Linda and Tyrone had discussed their past and current sexual behavior, could the tragedy have been avoided? There are no guarantees. People are known to downplay their sexual history, especially when questions are posed by a potential or current mate. Had Linda asked Tyrone about his sexual history and behavior, is it likely that he would have confessed to sexual encounters with men?

In this time of deadly sexually transmitted diseases, every sexually active female must be fully conscious of the risks she may be taking. At the end of the day, very few of us will be able to say that she has lived without ever placing herself at risk. The key, the challenge, is to reduce our risk, to be responsible in our sexual relationships and not to trust others to keep us safe.

The only known way to reduce our risk of contracting HIV through sexual activity is to use latex barriers (condoms, dental dams) each and every time we have sex. Yes, it is possible that your man may be living on the down low, sleeping with other women, or "shooting up" now and then. This, we may not know or even suspect. It isn't fair, and it ain't easy, but it is our reality. As women, we must protect ourselves, there is no other way around it.

NO More Secrets, NO More Lies":

A Video Review by Kinaya Jolomi Ade

I sat astonished as I viewed this powerful 28 minute video tape entitled *No More Secrets, No More Lies: Brothers Living Life on the Down Low*. J. L. King produces the video, and he has decided to openly talk about the double life that he and other "down low" men have led. This life is not one of infidelity where the brother is having an affair with another woman, but one in which the brother is having sexual liaisons with other men (he may even have a special man on the side).

King states that most women are unaware of this secretive life; and after interviewing several sisters, I tend to agree. These down low men are African-American men who don't consider themselves to be gay or even bisexual, but secretly have sex with other men. Many are in serious relationships with women, and many of the down low men are married with children.

According to King, these men do everything that they can, not to expose themselves. They may be among those that gay bash. Many claim to detest homosexuals. There are no stereotypical gay mannerisms to clock, and it appears that they have no gay friends. They are skilled in making sure that there is nothing in their demeanor that suggests that they are anything but completely heterosexual. King further states that love is not involved with their male sexual partners, that is why these down low men can lead double lives. King says that they love the women that they are in relationship with, but they also love "kickin it" with their dude. [I was unable to determine whether or not King still lives life on the down low.]

There were two points in the film that I feel compelled to bring to your attention.

1). King states that not one of the last 5 women that he has had sex with asked him to wear a condom. [He did not state whether or not he did.]

2). He speaks of a married friend who contracted HIV from a down low relationship. This friend is a

father of a newborn baby, and did not know how to tell his wife. King suggested that since this friend had recently returned from Las Vegas, that he tell his wife that he had been with a prostitute, knowing that eventually she, and the African-American community, would forgive him. King warned that if his friend told his wife the truth, he would be ostracized by his wife and his community.

After viewing the video, I felt compelled to immediately educate every sister that I knew. The film was both educational and enlightening. Sisters, ask questions and observe behavior like you've never done before, your life may depend on it.

For More Information Check out:"No More Secrets, NO MORE LIES!" video : J. L. King : King & King Training: www.livingdownlow.com; "Black Men Living on the Down Low": Reprint of Mar 15, 2001 article from USA Today: www.usastuff.20m.com; "The Low Down on Down Low Culture" by Steven G. Fullwood,www.africana.com/column/bl_voices_60.ht; "A Deadly Taboo - Is homophobia in the black community fanning the flames of HIV infection among African-Americans, the hardest-hit population outside sub-Saharan Africa?" by Alicia Montgomery: http://dir.salon.com/news/feature/2001/06/22/aids/index.html These articles are reprinted by permission from the website www.sisterlove.org [Newletter-LoveNotes]

Nationwide Initiative Launched to Fight HIV/AIDS Among African Americans

More than 150 organizations in more than 60 cities across the country will participate in the third annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD) Feb. 7, 2003.

NBHAAD is a nationwide campaign that addresses the HIV/AIDS "State of Emergency" among African-Americans. The objective of NBHAAD is to encourage African-Americans to get educated, get tested and get involved to fight the disease. On Feb. 7, local HIV/AIDS outreach organizations across the country will conduct programs in their communities including free HIV testing, town meetings and youth rallies.

For more information about NBHAAD and to locate local organizations participating in the campaign, log on to www.blackaidsday.org

Congresswoman Barbara Lee

Continued from page 72

at the time —somehow they put in a provision that only allowed federal funds [for sex education] to be used by states that would accept abstinence-only programs in terms of sex education for young people. So many states, most states, have taken the money because they agreed to teach abstinence-only. I'm pleased that in California we decided not to accept the money, because we know that abstinence-only is not a strategy that will provide for pregnancy prevention, HIV/AIDS/STD prevention with young people. So I introduced a bill that would require us to fund programs and to allow states to teach comprehensive sex education programs. Sure abstinence-only is a strategy, but given the dangers of venereal disease and of HIV and AIDS and pregnancy — teenage pregnancy — I believe — and many, many members of Congress believe, and this is on a bipartisan basis — that a comprehensive approach really is the healthy approach and the realistic approach and the way that we really will get to our young people with regard to healthcare and pregnancy prevention. And we're moving forward with our bill. You know, quite frankly, we've got the right wing and the Christian Coalition [against us]. There are those that would not want to see this strategy be part of our [national HIV prevention] strategy. But I think it's just downright outrageous to penalize states, to penalize young people, with the withdrawal of federal funds if in fact they want to learn more about sex education. [There has never been federal funding explicitly earmarked for comprehensive sex education. The 1996 law therefore does not actually withdraw funds from states that teach safer sex, but rather sets aside special funding exclusively for abstinence-only programs.]

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Maisha Yearwood
continued from page 59

Although Yearwood chose to come out to parents formally, her sexuality had never really been a secret. "I was the girl in high school who was obviously gay." She attended the progressive high school at Friends Seminary in the East Village, the alma mater of Live Schrieber, Kyra Sedgewick, and good girlfriend Amanda Peet, star of *The Whole Nine Yards* and *Changing Lanes*.

"She hasn't changed much," Peet told me. "She's one of the most charismatic people that I know. She really lights up a room." Did she and Yearwood dream of the day they'd see their names in lights in Hollywood? Peet laughs at me. "Honestly, we were thinking about the after-school basketball game against Brooklyn Friends. And I want to put it on record that Yearwood couldn't make the girls basketball team. Sh"s a very prissy girl at heart." Although Yearwood pined for many of her fellow classmates, Amanda wasn't one of them. Even if she can play ball. "Amanda wasn't my type, I wasn't even sweatin' her like that."

> "L.A.'s devoid of a lesbian community that I understand, but I manage to find women to date."

Yearwood's an activist, but she's not pushing her gay agenda on Hollywood even as movies get further and further removed from reality. "I don't think anybody's trying to buy anything about a lesbian Black woman or an Iranian woman or a Latino woman. I don't think the studio is trying to hear anything like that," she says. "Hollywood's safe—500 steps behind reality and the way we live our lives." But, she puts a gay character in everything she writes "mostly because we exist. Everyone has a brother or a cousin or a nephew or something. Especially now." Of course, Yearwood changes the dynamics of the game just by walking into the rarified, mostly white, executive suites of studios around town. *The Two-Year Mark* is actually based on her own relationship with a refined girlfriend who had to move with her into her parents' Harlem brownstone. "I guess it's going to start with someone like me, who'll come up with the story," Yearwood says. "Or it's going to be a Halle Berry type who's a lesbian. If I'm not going to do it, who's going to do it?"

After ending a three-year relationship, Yearwood's single now. "Very single," she emphasizes. "Loving singledom, actually. It's very hard to date in L.A. L.A.'s devoid of a lesbian community that I understand, but I manage to find women to date." As if on cue, Yearwood's new friend, a woman she met in Oakland, approaches from a nearby table. This is why Yearwood could barely focus on me. I can feel the love is new. She introduces me then explains her big goals. "I want to be a writer who delivers," she begins. "I want to go to a movie one afternoon and see one of my movies. It's going to be fucking incredible the day I can do that." She smiles broadly. "I'll go every weekend. I'll go to Magic Johnson's theater first. Then, I'll go downtown. Then I'll take my friends. And once that happens," she pauses for a second, glances at her friend, takes a breath. "I'll find other goals."

Maurice Hines
continued from page 53

Choreography and Dancing," Maurice laments, "I was very gracious and thanked them, but without her to share it with it wasn't the same. I just do the work now and hope I can pass it on to the younger generation."

Maurice is currently limiting his performing schedule and is concentrating more on mentoring, choreographing and directing.

"When I'm on tour I teach free jazz and hip-hop classes to the kids. I stopped tapping once my mother passed away because I did that for her.

"I love choreographing and directing. I love being with dancers. I don't have to be in the front anymore. I'm 58 years old, looking fabulous, but I've been doing this since I was 5 years old." And Maurice can still do those 5 o'clock kicks!

Despite his age, there's no chance of Maurice Hines throwing in the towel anytime soon. His busy schedule would challenge artists a third his age, and pity and praise the poor novice lucky enough to fall under the whip of this talented perfectionist. "A lot of the young kids today take one dance class and think they're ready. What are you going to do? Take a hip-hop class and go audition for Alvin Ailey? I don't think so. You must be versatile. Do jazz, tap, ballet, Dunham, Horton. Do all the great techniques so that you have options in life. And learn your theatre. Theatre discipline is top-of-the-line discipline.

"I am so grateful to have a dance background. There were times when I was doing eight shows a week and I didn't feel like coming in for the matinee. But I did

> "What are you going to do? Take a hip-hop class and go audition for Alvin Ailey? I don't think so. You must be versatile. Do jazz, tap, ballet, Dunham, Horton. Do all the great techniques so that you have options in life."

anyway. I remember when I didn't feel like taking class, and I did it anyway, and the teacher said, 'OK, get that leg up to here,' and I did it. Discipline. Dance, theatre disciplines. That's what has kept me young."

So when all is said and done, what does dancer, singer, actor, choreographer, and director Maurice Hines want to be said of him?

"I just want it to be said that I was a good person who did the right thing, especially for my people. There have been opportunities to further my career by doing the wrong thing with regards to my people. But I was never about that.

"I am a Black man in this society. I represent that. I happen to like representing that. People have said to me 'I don't like it when they call you a Black dancer.' And I say, 'It don't bother me because that's what I am.' I bring all the Blackness to it: Cab, Lena, and The Nicholas Brothers. They brought all this to us. So you can call me Black all you want. I love it!"

continued from page 54

Dee Dee has been hailed as the heir apparent to the Jazz vocal legacy by the passing of giants Carmen McCrae, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughan. She saw the tradition dying and decided to take up the mantle. She even toured for several years in For Ella, a show that paid homage to her musical idol, Ella Fitzgerald. After the show's closing, Bridgewater decided that it was time to do something else. She wasn't sure what, just that it was time to be herself for a while. She had done music that was old, some of it borrowed, and much of it blue. (Her debut album is titled *Afro Blue*.) It was time for a foray into her own territory. The result is her latest CD, *This is New*.

The new project is the first album that Bridgewater has recorded that focuses solely on the work of one composer: Kurt Weill. The inspiration for the album was Bridgewater's attendance at a centennial tribute to the composer in Poland. She loved the music but noted that most of the interpretations of it were dark. "I found in his songs an irony and a wry humor, which poked fun at human foibles," Bridgewater said. "I wanted to give that take on the work." She began to listen to everything that Weill had collaborated on—even a work for which Langston Hughes had written the lyrics. The "storyish" character of the songs allow her to imbue the songs with her natural sense of theatre.

This is not an album to listen to if you're in a hurry, or of you need some background music. Bridgewater is a storyteller whose tools are impeccable phrasing and a palette of thousands of colors for words, the envy of instruments made of brass and wood and skin. Perhaps her mature artistic sense is a byproduct of the comfort she feels in her body since turning 50.

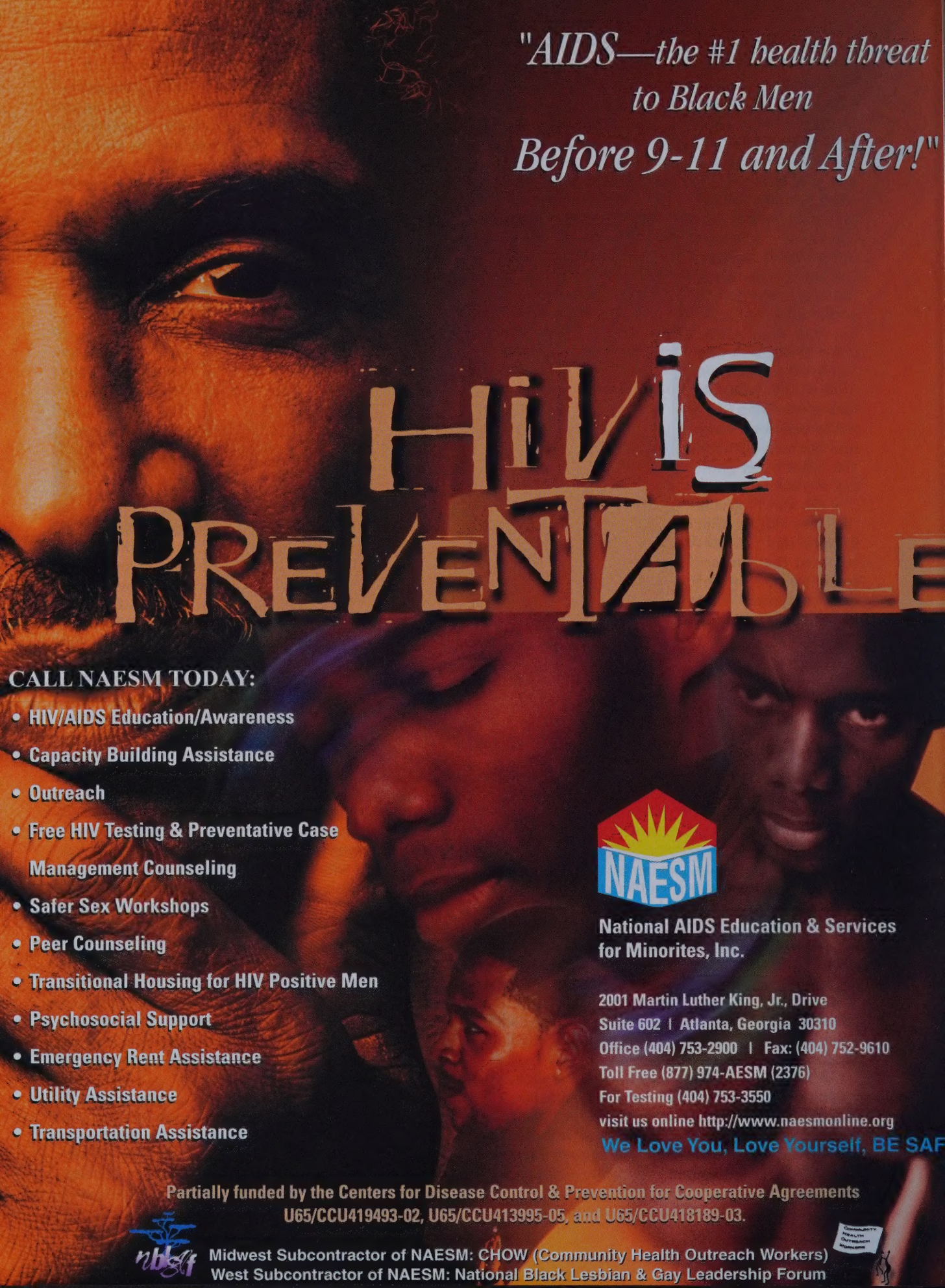
Bridgewater describes a new, heightened sensuality, and says that onstage her personae is more like Millie Jackson than the demure and aloof singer usually associated with jazz. "I don't know what it is, but I am loving it. It's almost raunchy," Bridgewater revealed, "I'm more comfortable in my body than I've ever been. I feel so sensuous ... and I am loving it."

Singing has been called the most intimate art form, one which summons every emotion ever experienced in the artist's life. So, how does Bridgewater handle a lyric? She pauses, distracted by the tinkering of a refrigerator repairman. She pads into the kitchen, and the tinkering stops. She re-enters, smiling, voice gliding across the gleaming hardwood floor. She eases into the architectural comfort of the sofa: "I take the lyric in—in my head first—kind of let it simmer inside, make a thousand decisions at once. What kind of inflection? Should I bend the note? What color? Try something different or sing it straight? But eventually, and on beat, I have to let it go on a musical breath."

The connections with the late Phyllis Hyman are evident. They'd both contributed to the film *The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh*—Bridgewater as an actress, Hyman as a singer on its soundtrack. Bridgewater and Hyman had portrayed the same character in the Broadway smash Sophisticated Ladies. "I loved Phyllis. I miss Phyllis," Bridgewater lamented, "I lost my voice the night of her death. I sang with great difficulty."

After that show, a couple of Hyman's "handlers" came backstage to, Bridgewater thought, lament the loss of a great singer. After exchanging niceties, they expressed interest in working with Bridgewater in a way that fanned a nonchalant hand at the death of Hyman. Bridgewater was outraged: "Get the fuck out of my dressing room!" The incident left her shaken and brought an epiphany: "We really have to look out for one another. In this business it can be dog-eat-dog, and we can get very isolated. We have to check in on one another a little more often."

What's next for Bridgewater? "I don't know," Bridgewater ponders, "Well, I have an idea, but I'm not ready to talk about it just yet." Bridgewater has learned to hold her ideas close until they are in motion. She assures that it will allow her to be all of herself, to combine her love and flair for the theatrical, her voice rich and ripe. Sing, baby. Listen.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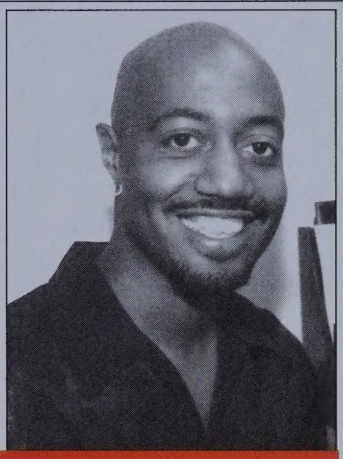
stand up & represent

we're Black, we're out, we're proud!

annual march signals new day for Black gay pride celebrations

words by Craig Washington



"When I saw that other folks were in tears, I knew it was all worth it. I knew why this march needs to continue to happen."

Dig, if you will, the picture. It began one year ago as one proud gay brother's dream. In the birthplace of that most renowned dreamer Martin Luther King Jr., a procession of Black gays and lesbians walked tall and jubilant in the second annual Stand Up and Represent Atlanta Black Gay Pride March on Labor Day. It was a crowning culmination capping a glorious weekend of affirmation, revelation, and reverie.

The event drew 400 people, more than twice as many participants as last year's premiere march. Rev. Antonio Jones of Unity Fellowship Church led the joyous crowd in prayer at the pre-march rally in the West End Mall. From there, they took to the streets drawing occasional applause and puzzled stares from onlookers with such chants as "we're Black, we're out, we're proud" and "who let the gays out." "It was like a pep rally and a celebration of freedom," said assistant march coordinator Nikki Young. Police officers flanked the front and back of this lively contingent to ensure protection. But aside from a lone minister who condemned the marchers, there was no opposition reported.

Political leaders and candidates in attendance included Congressman John Lewis and several Atlanta City Council members including Anne Fauver who is openly gay. Georgia State Senator Vincent Fort joined the post-march rally at West End Park.

"When I kept looking back from the frontline, I saw so many people," beamed march founder Anthony Antoine McWilliams. "When I saw that [assistant march coordinator] Shane Johnson and other folks were in tears, I knew it was all worth it. I knew why this march needs to continue to happen."

For McWilliams, a prominent HIV educator and performance artist, it was once again literally a dream come true. Last year he dreamt of a group of Black gay men marching out in the daylight. "When I woke up, I thought, 'oh, that would be cute,' but I didn't think it could be a reality." When a fellow activist challenged McWilliams to realize his vision, he gathered others including chief coordinator Jimmie Scott to plan the first known Black gay march in less than two months. Despite limited publicity and inclement weather, approximately 200 people marched in the rain from the steps of the State Capitol building to the Martin Luther King Center for Non-Violent Social Change.

The 2002 march organizers decided to place the march route entirely within a Black neighborhood, the historic West End district. "We wanted to bring it into an historically Black community that was instrumental to the civil rights struggle," said Michael Slaughter, board chair of In The Life Atlanta, the official Atlanta Black Gay Pride organization. "We also needed to build relationships instead of separating [ourselves] from our people." Youth organizer J. Lawrence Warren noted, "It's about time we represent in our own spaces. But it's not about where we do it, as long as we do it."

Warren also emphasized the significance of the march for LGBT youth: "The march gives them something to look up to. When we are part of a community that is proud of itself, it builds confidence." Warren and Young, both 23, called for increased inclusion of youth in future events. Young also noted segregation between men and women throughout the weekend. "I saw small cliques of women among a slew of men. If you look at the overall participation, it's a male-heavy event."

Weeks before the event, the planning committee encountered some local resistance to the post-march rally convening in West End Park. The West End Neighborhood Planning Unit (N.P.U.) initially declined the committee's application. When the decision was challenged by a member, the NPU overturned the vote and approved the rally. Several march organizers speculated that the lukewarm reception may not have been entirely homophobic, since they had not established any prior presence in the West End. "This was a lesson," McWilliams observed. "We can make a difference, and there is acceptance for us in our community."

The march concluded a five-day series of Pride events coordinated by In The Life Atlanta. Most of the activities were held at the Renaissance Waverly, the official host hotel. The weekend commenced with a rousing candlelight vigil led by Pastor YaQar of Alpha and Omega AIDS Foundation. The opening reception featured spoken word and African dance performances. Keynote speaker Mayor Shirley Franklin, Atlanta's first African American female mayor, also became the first Atlanta mayor to address Black Gay Pride. "The progress you have made is wonderful, and I hope we can continue to make progress in the area of gay rights together," she said. The following day included a generous selection of workshops, panel discussions, and a health fair. On the day before the march, 50 attendants flocked to a worship service at the hotel, which was followed by a Pride brunch at the Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Center. Slaughter deemed this year's Pride an overall success: "This event allowed African-American LGBT people to come together and celebrate our uniqueness."

At one of the weekend's high points, Congressman Lewis drew a standing ovation for his remarks at a discussion about political involvement. "Things have changed, and its because we got in the way and we agitated. Keep getting in the way and agitating on Black Gay Pride weekend and every day."

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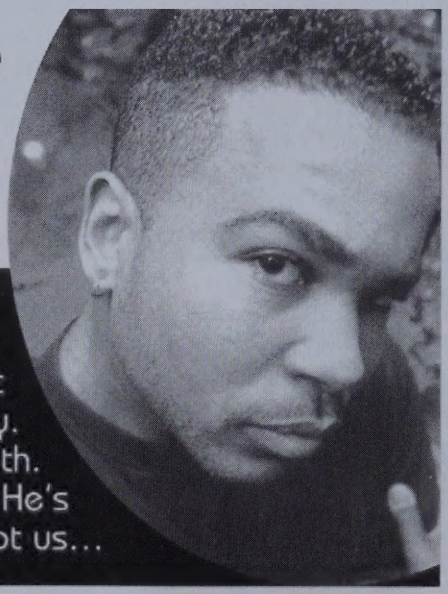

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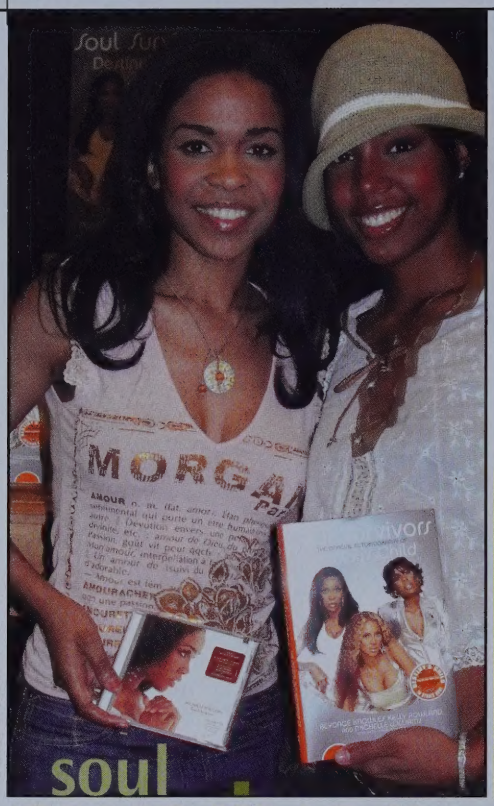


Tina Paul

soul survivor

They have survived the struggles of a budding Texas-bred girl group. They have survived internal strife, the drama, and the media circus of a chart-topping supergroup. Still, Destiny's Child has managed to become one of the best-selling female groups in music history.

Beyoncé Knowles, Kelly Rowland, and Michelle Williams have laid it all on the line in *Soul Survivors: The Official Autobiography of Destiny's Child* (Regan Books). As these bootylicious songbirds spread their wings with solo projects, this book marks the first installment of what will be a long career of soulful music for decades to come.

> "It must be a part of human nature to love drama. We never would have sold as many records—and we never would have been this popular—if our member changes did not happen.
> —Beyoncé Knowles"

literary roundup

reviews by Dr. Alaric Blair

> "The work reads like a conversation with a good friend over cocktails."

Among scholars of literature, there was once a tradition of reviewing books for the purpose of providing some context for their place in the body of scholarship of the Academy (also known as the canon). These days, it appears that people are less concerned about the literariness of books. There is mass appeal for eponymy and fortune. The sad truth is that an infinitesimal percentage of writers (current and dead) have enjoyed fortune and fame—all deserving of their success.

Reviews have become a way of publicizing novels and books of poetry rather than true critique of talent and creativity. No one challenges literature anymore. To do so would appear to undermine the author, especially writers of color. We expect that a critic of color will say that our book is "best-seller" material when it isn't, just because we share an ethnic connection. Personally, I have benefited from constructive criticism as much as I have from the adulations. It was a well-meaning critic's comments that sent me back to my manuscripts and to graduate school in writing.

With more African Americans writing and publishing now than ever, it behooves us (writers, editors, scholars, teachers) to provide some quality control. All books (whether the author tried his/her best or not) shouldn't have been published—not yet. With that, I'd like to begin this journey through our Fall 2002 literary selections.

A bright young writer from Detroit named Brent Dorian Carpenter has written an insightful first novel—

Man of the Cloth (First Books Library). The story begins with a tragic accident that claims the lives of the Catholic church's hierarchy—leaving the church without ordained leadership. The remaining leadership scrambles to keep the church from spinning out of control. The plot thickens when scientists attempt to clone Jesus from DNA taken from the Shroud of Turin. This novel is a true page-turner and will challenge the reader's fundamental beliefs in religious demagoguery and scientific discovery.

Carpenter has penned the most unique story of the summer—one that doesn't necessarily revolve around the vicissitudes of dysfunctional relationships, promiscuous lovers or the lives and times of the Black bourgeoisie—one that this reviewer enjoyed for its sheer "novelty." Get this book to find out if there was a "second resurrection." We've not heard the last of Brent Dorian Carpenter. For, as we sit enjoying his first entry into the literati, his second novel waits in the wings.

Since I'm on the subject of the church, it might be a good idea to discuss another work written by K. Godfrey Easter of Seattle. *Love Lifted Me: In Spite of the Church* (LLM Publishing Group) is an intimate look at one man's struggle to come to terms with his homosexuality and his relationship with the Black church (namely the Church of God in Christ). Though not a new story, it is an important one that Easter brings to bear through his own experiences of isolation from his fellow "Christians." This reviewer can see the cultural and social ramifications of a work such as this being available to those who share in Easter's struggle.

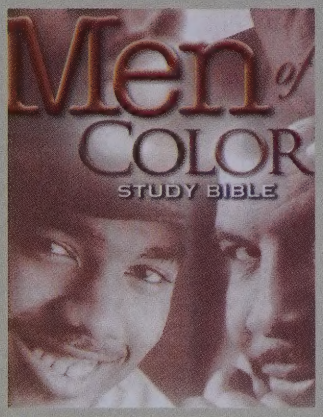
The work (touted as nonfiction) reads like a conversation with a good friend over cocktails at a sparsely peopled club. There's the intrigue of finding new love, controversy in the upper echelons of his church, and the dilemma of raising a son amidst the turmoil of the ever-ending search for his own homosexual identity. Easter tells his story with sincerity and flare; however, the superfluous use of "churchese" is a little unsettling. There are times that his language is fraught with platitudes and is wordy—symptomatic of those loquacious church announcers or of soporific preachers. Many chapter titles are borrowed from hymns of the church so that the reader may find him/herself humming the tunes while reading—an interestingly suggestive device. Whereas the naturalness of speech makes *Love* a realistic read, its clumsiness distracts the reader from fully grasping the genius of this work.

We find, at the conclusion of our conversation with Easter that his life as an openly gay minister of music isn't unlike our own. The fa-

Men of Color Study Bible

review by Jerry Daniels

A small Black-owned business collaborated with 60 African-American religious leaders and scholars, to publish a new Bible interpreted with a Black male perspective.



The Men of Color Study Bible is the product of Nia Publishing Co., an Atlanta-based business founded in October 1998 by Mel Banks II, the company's chief executive officer.

One of the Bible's contributors is nationally known educator and lecturer Jawanza Kunjufu, who wrote a series of books under the title *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys.*

Banks met Kunjufu and some of the contributors of the Men of Color Study Bible while employed at Urban Ministries Inc., another publisher of Bibles based in Chicago and founded by Banks' father, Melvin Banks Sr.

"We tried to get input from folks in all denominations," Banks said.

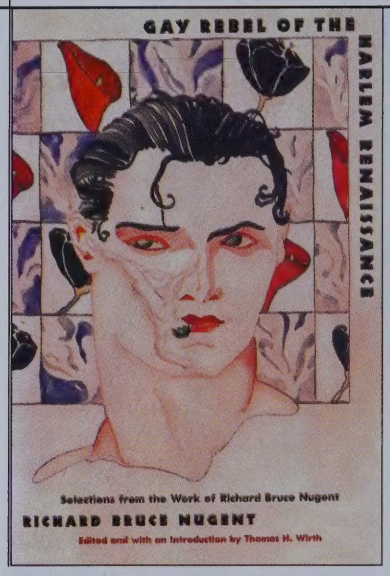
Interlaced with pages that outline each book of the King James biblical interpretation, *The Men of Color Study Bible* also contains essays that address spirituality and issues specific to the African-American community, but especially those concerning Black men. Some of those issues include the criminal justice system, fathering, marriage, and sexual ethics.

The idea to produce Bibles that address African Americans came while Banks was employed at Urban Ministries Inc. He encountered people doing business with Urban Ministries challenged with the task of getting their children to read the Bible.

"People would ask, 'Is there a Bible my children could relate to?'" he said.

Banks said he approached a number of publishers, including Thomas Nelson Publishing and Zondervan, about putting together a Bible geared toward African Americans.

The response, however, was always: "There was no need for it because Black people already buy the Bible," he said.



literary round up continued

"Nugent is shown in this work to have made more culturally diverse contributions to art and literature than any other gay artist/writer of his time."

miliarity of ostracism, the pain of condemnation, and the obscurity about what the Bible really says about homosexuality make this book an important one in the continuing conversation regarding homosexuality and the Black church.

Not until his transition in 1987 did many people really know and appreciate the tremendous talents of Richard Bruce Nugent–writer, activist, actor, and artist. Incidentally, 1987 saw the transition of another of our brothers in the struggle: James Baldwin.

Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance: Selections from the Works of Richard Bruce Nugent, edited by Thomas H. Warth and published by Duke University Press, is a collection of stories, essays, drawings, and paintings that stand as fitting tribute to the enormity and immense versatility of Nugent's talent.

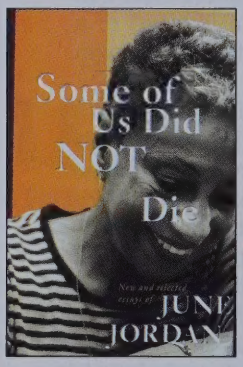
Dubbed a "true Renaissance Man" by E. Lynn Harris, Nugent is shown in this work to have made more culturally diverse contributions to art and literature than any other gay artist/writer of his time. Theories abound with posthumous outings of noted figures in the Harlem Renaissance. It seems that we gain some sense of empowerment when we realize that many writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance loved the way we do during an even more culturally suppressive society than today.

What Warth does in this brilliant testament to Nugent is highlight the artist's works that have the greatest cultural significance to the Black community and chronicle the most important epoch of Black artistic history. The work begins with a foreword by Henry [Skip] Louis Gates, Jr. (who some would say is a foremost authority on Black history) who says that it is "astonishing that so many prominent participants in the Harlem Renaissance were reportedly gay, lesbian, or bisexual." Maybe "astonishing" wasn't the right word. It certainly is "remarkable."

It could not have been an easy task deciding which of Nugent's works to include in this chronicle, but with scholastic aplomb and cultural sensitivity, Warth makes a good show. After a rather long (but incredibly erudite introduction), the reader is presented with one of Nugent's first published pieces, *Sahdje*, which appeared in Alain Locke's seminal anthology *The New Negro* (1925). For those of you who might not know, Locke is considered to have been the "dean" of the Harlem Renaissance–learned, artistic, and intrepid.

No tribute to Nugent would be complete without the inclusion of *Smoke, Lilies and Jade*–Nugent's homoerotic poem that was first published in *Fire!!* November 1926. If *Sahdje* established Nugent as a legitimate writer, *Smoke* (his most important piece) exalted him to the esteemed status of "gay writer of the Harlem Renaissance."

Gay Rebel also includes myriad drawings and artists renderings done by Nugent–often in conjunction with his writings. Now, that's talent–without the benefit of agents, Web designers, or publicists. *Gay Rebel* takes us back to a time when brothers and sisters wrote and produced art because they loved it. Thanks to this work, we get an intimate look into the life and art of our beloved wunderkind, who gives us hope that maybe one day we too may attain artistic beatification.



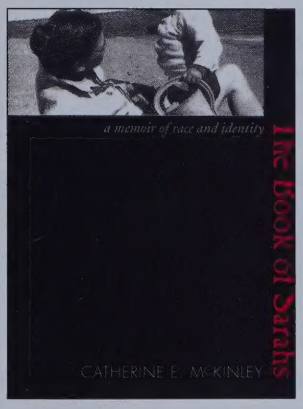
Another blessed spirit that has made its flight to join the ancestors was that of June Jordan who succumbed to breast cancer June 14 of this summer, but her voice still speaks as loudly and proudly as it ever did.

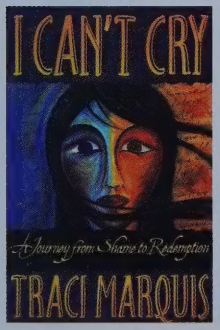
Some of Us Did Not Die: New and Selected Essays of June Jordan (Basic Civitas Books) is a collection of some of Jordan's most popular essays and begins with the Harlem riots in the 1960s and ends with her thoughts on the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. It is clear from the topics covered that Professor Jordan was deeply concerned about the fate of African Americans and the society at large. She has been said to have "written her way to the forefront of political analysis, and moral summoning ... " and she wrote until her time on earth expired. I found her essay titled *Problems of Language in a Democratic State* especially pointed in that it confronts the cultural myths of segregation and desegregation

(particularly the latter) as linguistic anomalies that didn't cut through to the heart of incongruence or the accessibility of the alleged American dream.

The profundity of Jordan's works as evidenced by *Some* is only paralleled by her flare for the poetic. Hers was a voice that (like it or not) had to be heard. Although Jordan's body may not be here anymore, [she] "did not die." There can be no better legacy to leave a troubled (but hopeful) society than one that addresses the gravity of social and cultural conditions from a solution-based perspective. June Jordan had the privilege of doing what many have not: leaving her own epitaph as a reminder to celebrate humanness and diversity.

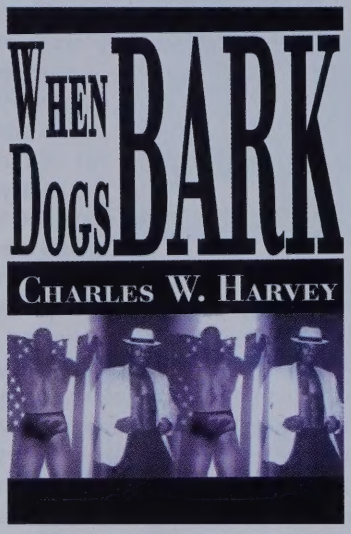
Although Jordan was able to monitor the political and racial pulse across decades of American "evolution," there is another author who tells her own story about the struggle for racial identity. *The Book of Sarahs: A Family in Parts* (Counterpoint) by Catherine McKinley is a memoir of a biracial child adopted by a white family in the 1960s who spends much of her young adult life in search of her birth mother—not exactly a unique story, but the telling of the story with all its intrigue, drama, frustrations, and triumphs is what makes this book worthy of reading. It reads like a "discovery" novel, but it isn't what one would generally read unless there is a genuine interest in the subject. The writing is quite good, but reads like an episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* where adoptees are always trying to find their birth parents. This type of story was quite popular in the late '80s and early '90s—when people from all walks of life set out on journeys to discover themselves. Apparently, this book is the result of a great deal of searching and finding on McKinley's part and identifying (as she puts it) "within someone else's paradigm." The good writing saves this book from being just another "I'm-looking-for-my-real-mother" story.





I Can't Cry: A Journey from Shame to Redemption (Sterling Publishers, LLC), a first novel by attorney-turned-novelist Traci Marquis, doesn't deliver what one might consider a riveting narrative of a personally significant story. The writing is formulaic and trite in some spots, but the book works as a way of delivering an empowering message about an African-American woman who finds redemption in the shame of having been sexually violated—a true survivor's tale.

And it is high time that a story like this was told; however, more attention to thematic structure, details, and the keen eye of a seasoned editor would have made this book a more interesting read. Ironically, the characters are stifled by the overemphasis on wordy descriptions and ungainly dialogue. All in all, *Cry* is an ample first attempt in telling an incredibly sensitive and socially relevant story.



There were two entries of poetry this season. Charles W. Harvey, obviously no stranger to the publishing world, has reissued *When Dogs Bark* (iUniverse)—a book of poetry and short stories. William Wordsworth once defined poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling ... ." These are the two words I would definitely use to describe Harvey's writing: spontaneous and powerful. His work is spontaneous, because he ambushes his readers; his writing seems to come from nowhere and then—Bam—right between the eyes. The power in his writing has to do with the seemingly unrefined emotions associated with his poetry and prose—emotions not too often dealt with outside of a therapist's office.

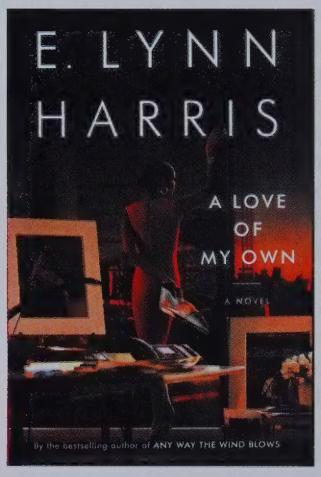
I am thinking about a particular story in this collection titled *It All Started with Underwear.* Initially, I assumed the story would be a benign, quasi-erotic story about a gay man's affinity for men's underwear. Well, it turns out that the story is indeed about a man with a fetish for other men's underwear, but the results are (let's just say) "criminal." I liked this story a great deal because it challenged my ivied literary conventions and it was well written.

Not for the faint at heart or the hypersensitive, Harvey's writing may well be a response to the "angry-black-gay-poets" movement that has been gaining momentum lately. Harvey tells a "bad" story "good" and uses his poetry as a way of delivering unrelenting blows against social institutions. Although a few of the poems are structurally flawed and "whiny," I enjoyed reading them for their merit as thought-provoking expres-

sions of spontaneous and powerful feelings. If Harvey's voice is akin to barking, his is one of the deepest and most ferocious I've heard in a long while.

Tales of a Woojiehead (Blackgurl Press), by Chicago native Gaylon B. Roberson, is the authors first published book of poetry. We applaud her efforts to pen the whisperings of her poetic muse. I was especially struck by the calypso-like rhythm of verses and Roberson's careful construction of poetic symmetry.

Included in this amalgam of poetry are short (very short) stories that are to the point and well written. Roberson's turn of phrase is both unique and refreshing and has a performance appeal. Augmenting the appeal of the books poetic merits are Roberson's use of various type fonts to convey mood and meaning. Ordinarily, this would be a publisher's no-no, but given the tenor of her poems and short stories, the device works wonderfully well and gives her work the type of uniqueness and variety very much missing from similar works already in print.



At last, we come to the book that has everyone talking: the eighth (count 'em 8th) installment in the E. Lynn Harris collection. A Love of My Own (Doubleday) continues with the saga of Raymond and his loves (or lack there of), a few new male and female characters and more fantastic escapades of Harris's larger-than-life characters. One in particular, Zola Denise Norwood, the editor of Bling Bling magazine appears to play opposite Raymond Tyler (a Harris perennial).

Not much (new) can be said for this novel other than the fact that Harris has decided to use more current events in his writing. Apparently, he was able to salvage the manuscript from the committee's pen in order to include the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

As usual, Harris's characters spin out of a grand imagination as he weaves more intrigue and secrecy into the sexuality and private lives of his characters. I found them even more contrived than usual and lacking in universal relatedness. Scene descriptions were linguistically unessential and verbose. But this is what sells novels, they tell me.

"As usual, Harris's characters spin out of a grand imagination as he weaves more intrigue and secrecy into their sexuality and private lives."

Whereas this "escapist" literature may be hugely entertaining and profitable, it is substantively deficient—the stuff soap operas are made of. Reading these types of books, as literature, is tantamount to reading the nutrition information on sugary snack packages for the recommended daily allowance of vitamins and minerals; you won't find any.

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continued from page 79

In fact, Barna Research Online, a marketing research company based in Ventura, Calif., reported that a 2001 study showed that African Americans were more likely to read from the Bible than whites.

These statistics do not surprise Banks. He notes, on the other hand, that a great number of Blacks, especially Black men, are attracted to other religions, such as Islam. Demonstrating the African presence in the Bible, he said, would help Blacks feel a greater connection to Christianity.

"Christianity has been considered [by most Blacks] a white religion," said Banks, noting that earlier Bibles contained pictures depicting biblical characters, including Jesus Christ, as white. "That's why we're trying to draw out the Black presence [in the Bible]."

Charles Britt, a deacon at Carolina Missionary Baptist Church in Suitland, Md., was unaware that Black characters existed in the Bible until his pastor mentioned it during a Sunday morning church service. Britt now owns a copy of the *Original African Heritage Study Bible.*

James C. Winston Publishing Co. published the Original *African Heritage Study Bible*, which depicts biblical characters as black, in 1993.

Pictorial depictions of Black biblical characters also exist in the *Holy Bible for Children of Color*, a product Banks says he and one employee self-published in his home under the name Children of Color Publishing.

"It was actually for children [and] adults," Banks said. The Children of Color Storybook Bible followed. Thomas Nelson Publishers and World Publishers lent support to Children of Color Publishing.

Because of an interest to produce Bibles addressing Blacks in general, Banks changed the name of his company to Nia Publishing Co. in October 1998. The company also grew in the number of people employed by Banks. On staff today are four telemarketers, who contact bookstores and help independent distributors, an administrative person, a business consultant, and an editorial director.

Released in 2000, the *Women of Color Study Bible* was the first book introduced under the new name. It received excellent reviews from customers who bought the book through Amazon.com and then wrote reviews published on the site.

"We as African Americans haven't been taught about our place in biblical history," the reader said. "But because of the extensive research by [Nia], we now know." "When the *Women of Color Study Bible* came out people would say, 'you got the women's, now where's the men's'," Banks recalled.

Nia Publishing released *The Men of Color Study Bible* last February. While it does not contain images of Black biblical characters, in each of its study sections it does mention a Black presence. The Hammites, introduced in Genesis, are an example.

This fall, Nia publishing company will release five new books. T*he Wisdom and Grace Bible*, produced for young women of color, is one of these books.

To learn more about the products Nia Publishing Co. offers, readers can visit its Web site, www.niapublishing.com. Readers can place book orders there or by also contacting the company by phone at 770/969-8103.

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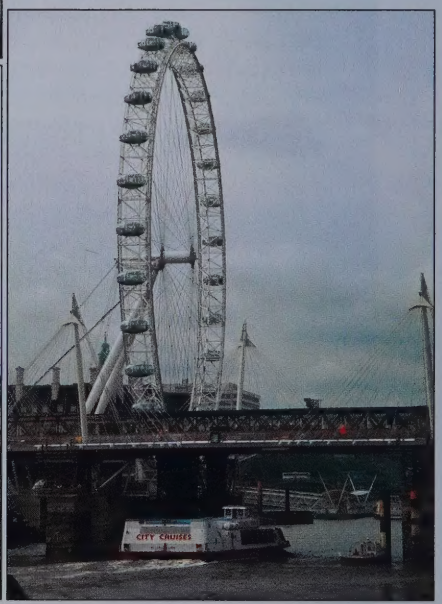
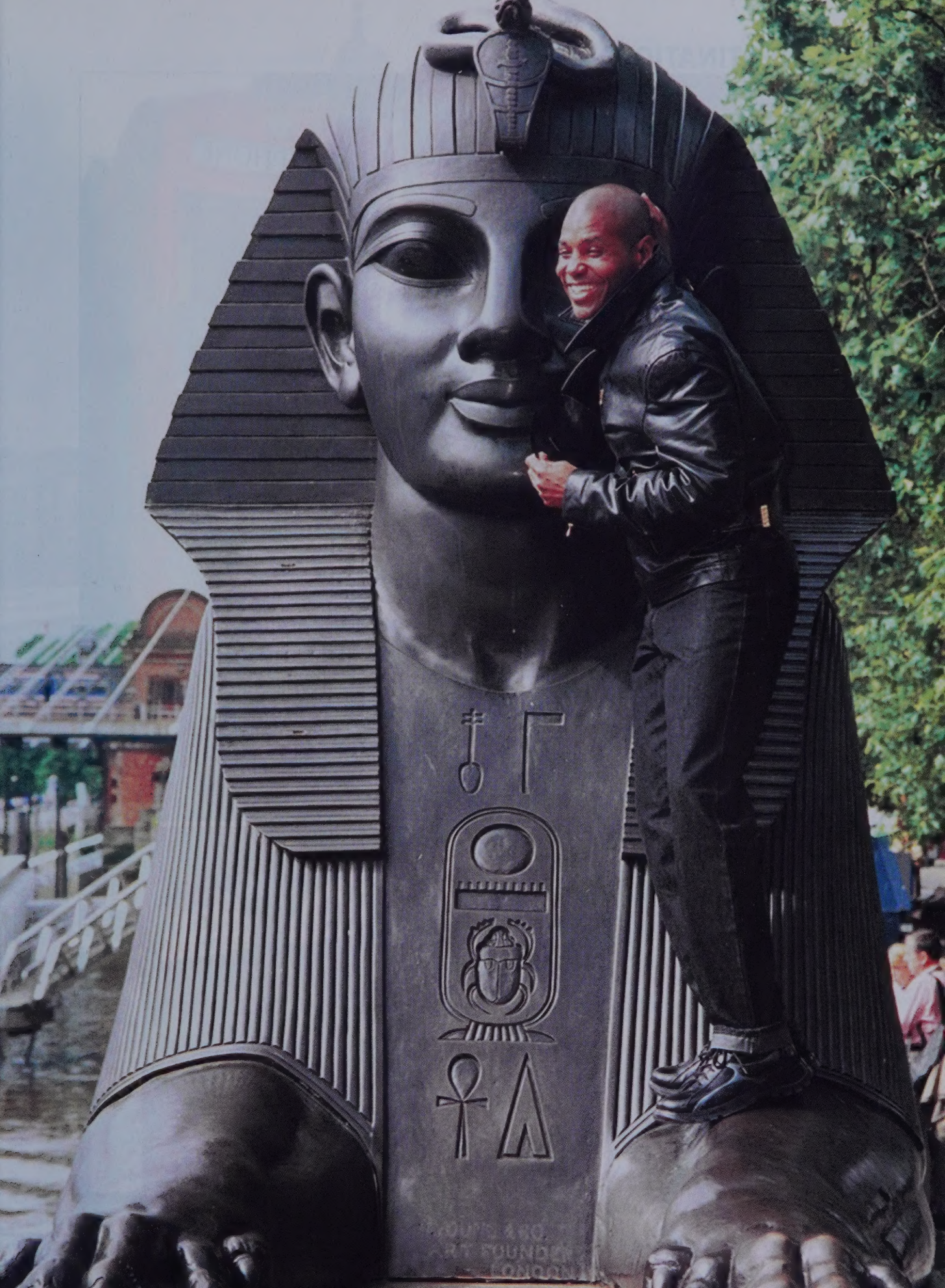
london
in a flash

words by Michael Andrea Adams
images by Darryl L. Matthew

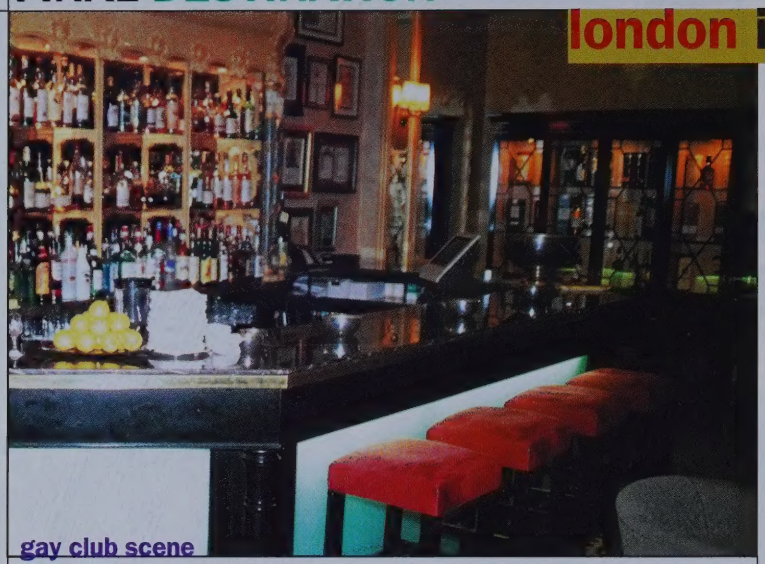
The recent launch of Brilliance of the Seas, the newest vessel in the Royal Caribbean fleet, brought forth a fury of travel industry professionals to the city of London for a two-day stint.

Home to more than 7 million, London, mother England's capitol, is enormous in size. After an 11-hour flight from Los Angeles, I was not up for sightseeing on the first day. And since a city this big can in no way be covered in a day, here it is just for you with the quickness.





london in a flash

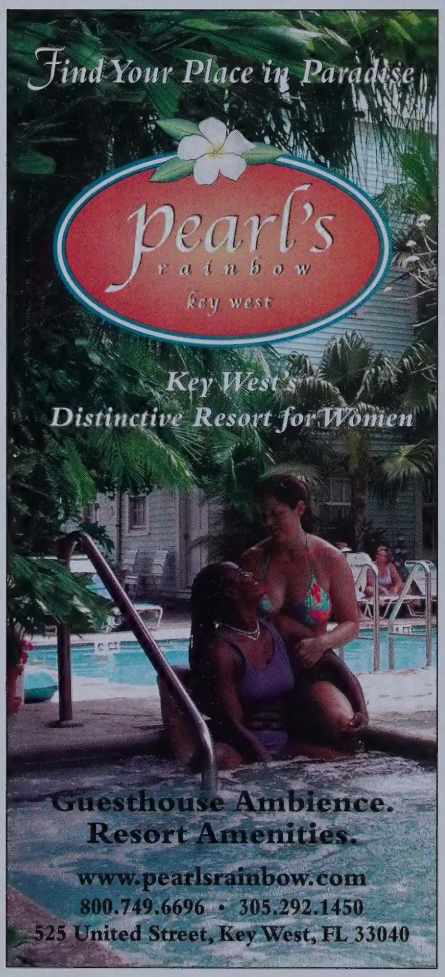


gay club scene

Heaven-*adjacent to Trafalgar Square in the heart of London's West End. www.heaven-london.com. In Brixton,* **The Fridge**-*the place to be on Friday or Saturday for "Love Muscle."* **Earl's Court**, *near Kensington Palace-considered to be an upscale gay area.* **Old Compton Street**-*a trendy community in Soho full of gay pubs and bars.*

lodging & entertainment

Hotels run the gamut from no-frills to the lap of phat luxury. It all depends on your budget.
For the most of London, deals and all, log onto www.visitbritain.com or call the British Tourism Authority in New York at 888/899-8391.



The Big Picture

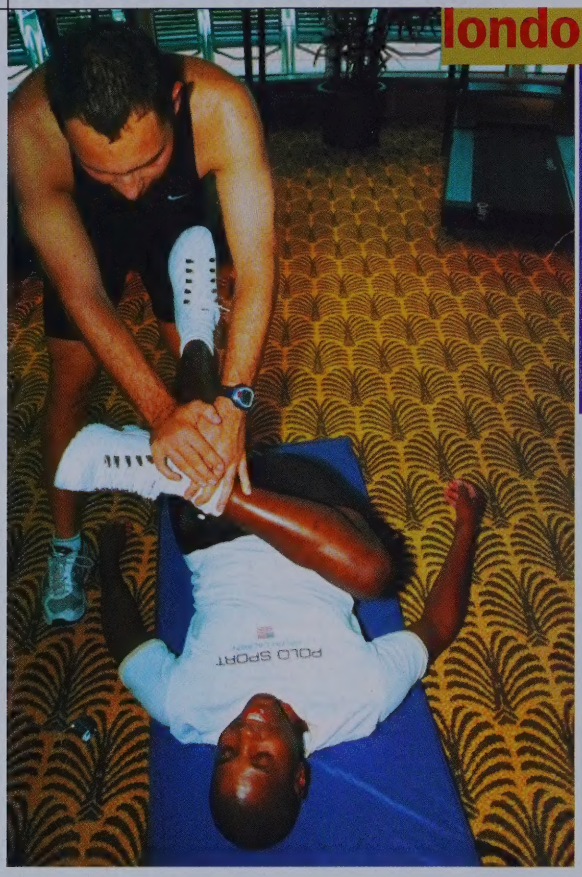
The city is divided into five sections: West, East, North, South, and Central. Each region is made up of a multitude of communities with something for everyone. Travel on the legendary River Thames is considered as a voyage through the city's history. British Airways' state-of-the-art London Eye offers sweeping views of the entire city and beyond. Afterward, put on some comfortable shoes and get to steppin' for an up close and personal experience.

West London

The west side is home to such landmarks as Kensington Palace, the former home of Queen Victoria. England's largest castle, Windsor, is also situated in West London, as are The Royal Botanical Gardens and The Natural History Museum. To experience the abridged version of London's attractions, climb aboard one of the many "hop on/hop off" tour buses. For a flat and reasonable fee, you will get a view of not just West London, but nearly the entire city. Do not, however, pass go or leave West London without a visit to Chelsea and Knightsbridge, home of the world-renowned department store Harrods, whose Latin motto "Omnia, omnibus, ubique" (everything, for everyone, everywhere) perfectly defines the clientele on any given day.

A few blocks down from Harrods is where you'll find the more hip Harvey Nicks (Harvey Nichols if you're into formality), another high-end department store where an array of items reminiscent of traveling abroad can be yours. And while the British pound,

london in a flash



"British Airways' state-of-the- art London Eye offers sweeping views of the entire city and beyond. Afterward, put on some comfortable shoes and get to steppin' for an up close and personal experience."

getting there

British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, United, American and Air New Zealand offer nonstop flights from gateway cities to London's Heathrow Airport (LHR).

From LHR into the city: The cheapest way into London from the airport (a 40-60 minute journey) is the Tube's Picadilly line @ approximately $5.60 in U.S. Trains leave every 10 minutes. Or try the Airbus leaving every 30 minutes and stopping throughout London (www.gobycoach @ approx. $12.50 US one way.

symbolized by what looks like a small "f" trying to be a capital "L" written in cursive, is worth almost double the value of the U.S. dollar, many items are comparatively more reasonable there. Play it safe by following the rule of thumb when traveling abroad, which suggests that if you purchase what you can't get at home, you will in no way feel cheated.

Central London

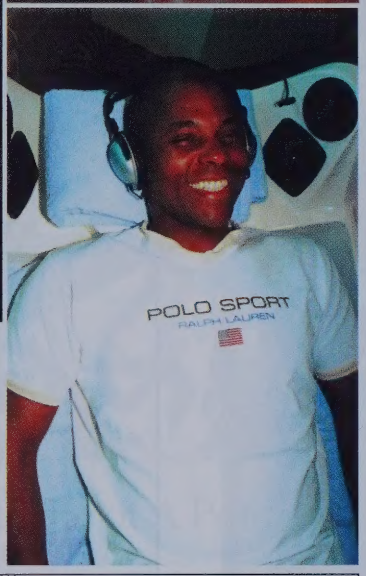
Central London is home to the twins: splendor and grandeur. It is also the seat of England's government where you'll find Buckingham Palace, The Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, England's most important church and national shrine. The tranquil Hyde Park, where the royal guards pass in between the change in shifts, is also in the vicinity as is Trafalgar Square and the Nation's Galleries.

Probably the best known location in all of London is Piccadilly Circus, an intriguing mix of gentleman's clubs, touristy shops, and giant neon signs somewhat reminiscent of New York's Times Square.

Soho was once a community for British subjects to experience sex clubs and sleaze. Convent Garden was the rundown haunt of vegetable and flower traders. Pretty SoHo Square is now a bustling community where the employees of the film, advertising, and design companies of nearby Dean and Wardour Streets come for a sandwich during lunch. The bosses, however, can most likely be found in the restaurants of Greek Street, just south of the square. Old Compton Street is another haven for Epicureans alike. And for the freshest fruits and vegetables, head for the Berwick Street market. Soho is also home to the multilevel jazz club Ronnie Scott's, a must-do for American tourists.

Visit Convent Garden's covered mall and the abundance of very chic and unique boutiques and outdoor cafes. The Royal Opera House is also in the neighborhood. And since you're so close, be sure and stop by Chinatown for Chinese food in London. Marked by beautiful and ornate gates on the street and ducks in the windows of almost every restaurant, you wont miss it. There are a ton of places open 'til the wee hours of the morning in this part of town. Just be careful because it's fast!

Last of all, you must do tea. Afternoon tea, that is. Because you're a tourist, hell, do it in style at The Savoy Hotel. You'll experience near royalty and above arriving in their Rolls Royce as the piano man plays while you indulge in a tower of finger sandwiches, scones, and a side of tea with milk, or cream if you prefer. Enjoy!



royal treatment

The launch of **Brilliance of the Seas**, *the newest vessel in the Royal Caribbean fleet, brought a fury of travel industry professionals to the city of London for a two-day stint. Our travel editor, Michael A. Adams, was one of them.*

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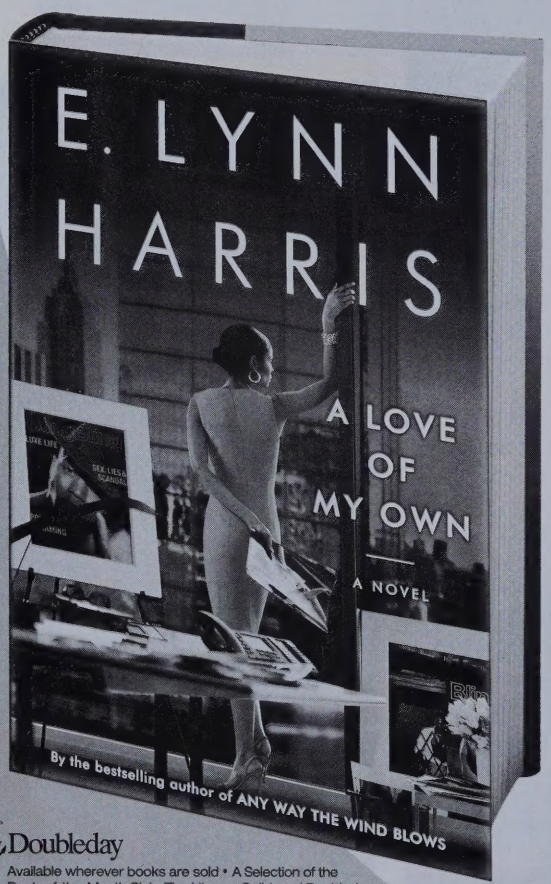

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PIECE OF MIND

Struck Again

words by Donna Payne

I am writing in response to the "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" article by Dorinda Henry. The Human Rights Campaign has struck again. They have struck a cord in the African-American community with Atlanta Gospel & Soul because the work needs to be done. Currently, we have African-American clergy in Miami, joining the Religious Right to fight against us. A flyer with Dr. King's picture on it, telling African Americans that Dr. King would be outraged if he knew homosexuals wanted "special rights." This was passed out to 300 Black churches. In the state of Washington, we have African-American clergy also teaming up with the Religious Right to keep us from having relationship and family protections. Around the country, a lot of African-American clergy are not willing to discuss sexuality, let alone sexual orientation. At which point will you choose to enter and begin the work that needs to be done?

HRC has already started the work by having Gospel & Soul. Connections in the local Atlanta community were made a year in advance. Churches were asked to attend by members that either came out of the closet by asking their choir and pastor to participate in the event *or* they were already out and felt their church should participate. One church was asked to participate by a straight ally that wanted to help. The process, calling, meeting, and writing letters to churches takes five months of local organizing work.

It is always easy to look at HRC's Gospel & Soul event from the outside with highly critical glasses. Atlanta Gospel and Soul was very successful with 450 people attending. That speaks for itself. Instead of using energy to attack HRC, I would suggest you change your "critical glasses" and put on some "work glasses." We need every same-gender-loving person writing letters to their pastors in their home state to let them know we are present, we are loved by God, and we deserve equal rights. Fight for your God given rights, don't fight us!

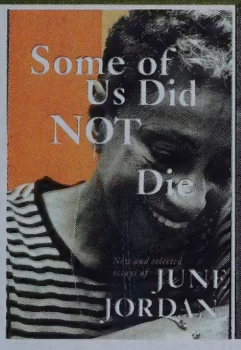
Donna Payne is Constituent Field Organizer for the Human Rights Campaign. She resides in Washington, D.C.

Remembering june jordan

words by Shirlette Ammons

1936 - 2002

"Any abridgement of anybody's right to exist places in jeopardy each one of us, regardless of race, class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, or gender."



The Life of A Politically Incorrect Poet

June Jordan, prolific essayist, novelist, journalist, educator, and "Universal Poet," died on June 14, 2002, after a valiant bout with cancer. Twenty-six books and publications in countless anthologies, literary journals, and magazines honor her career as the most published African-American writer in history. Recognizing her work is a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Conference of Black Writers, a Rockefeller Foundation Grant, the Prix de Rome in Environmental Design, accolades from the United Nations and Library of Congress, readings sponsored by the Academy of Poets, and teaching posts at City College of New York and Sarah Lawerence College. Since her first book, *Who Look at Me*, a poem dedicated to African-Americans published in 1969, Jordan has endlessly loved and fought on our behalf.

Born in Harlem, raised in the Bed-Stuy section of Brooklyn, Jordan's conversations with "Minister Malcolm" at his Temple No. 7 Headquarters in Harlem molded the platform for radical change in the struggle for Black liberation during the Black Power/Black Arts Movements. Her participation in the Feminism and the Black Writer seminar at the National Black Writer's Conference in 1978 insurrected the taboo between Black women, lesbianism, feminism, and what (if anything) a woman's sexual orientation has to do with her literary merit. Always one accurate step ahead of the changing times, Jordan's work began on the frontlines of the Black struggle and ended powerfully on the page, each breath confronted and confronting. She spent the final leg of her career as Professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley.

Author Shirlette Ammons recalls her interactions with the Poet/Warrior, June Jordan

When I sat down with Jordan in her UC Berkeley office in fall 2000, I asked her straight up, "Why ain't you crazy?" Her immediate, logical reply, "I don't have time to be."

On the train, like where I'm from, nothing is more than a blur. Modesco, Wasco, Merced, trivial black dots on the California map, whiz by so absolutely. I think about my aunts back in Mount Olive, N.C., and the contrived cold that marks their daily routine. I recall them adorning layers of cotton, fleece, and flannel to weather the refrigeration department at Carolina Turkeys. This nostalgic trip jabs my senses as I journey home in my thoughts on an early morning Amtrak that is at least 3,000 miles from my aunts and the turkey plant's frigid stench.

Poets commit the burden and beauty of each memory to their senses. This is why it matters to take a five-hour train ride from Bakersfield to Berkeley, Calif. to touch June Jordan's prolific right hand, the hand that penned jazz poetry so shrill it sings like a trumpet resounding from some higher place. Her delicate voice articulates poetry and political activism as if they are water from the same overflowing river. Jordan is, as she has been called, the "universal poet." Her writings take the scenic route home so that we can absorb everything she has already seen. Why does this poet/woman work so diligently to conjure a more sensible memory? When did she notice the air changing like the fraudulent winter behind the turkey plant's stony doors?

I am waiting for Jordan in her sixth floor office on UC Berkeley's campus. A picture of an Asian-American woman, tank-topped, buzz-cut, occupies the wall in front of me. Where are you? Torso precise at the corner of the wall. Eye casting me into a mystery. Hand of the hungry (from Jordan's *Living Room: New Poems* by June Jordan). She, holding a pro-action sign powerfully high, sends a rush of energy through my body. I wonder if poets realize they are holding up a sign. Is that enough? To write a poem about change and let it sit on a page hoping someone eventually reads it, "gets it" then purges forth with elevated voice and signs and fists? As Jordan raps up a conversation with a young man who stopped by, I realize I am here, recalling passages from Jordan's *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood*: Ace! Look me in my eye! So I lifted my head to look him in the eye. What are you afraid of? And I answered him, Nothing, Sir. ... And at that moment I felt like I was making myself a promise: A big one, reciting lines from *Manifesto of the Rubber Glove*: I am wearing brand new loud blue rubber gloves because I don't wanna die from mainstream contamination/ mainstream poison water poisonous like ... and living the quote: A woman's body is the universal shelter (from *Living Room*). I am wondering about her fiery spirit, comprehending how strikingly massive word power really is. June Jordan's language pierces me to the bone and I shiver at the load her soul carries. Any abridgement of anybody's right to exist places in jeopardy each one of us, regardless of race, class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, proportional size (from Jordan's, *Affirmative Acts: Political Essays*). We are up at the world's sleeping hour because we don't want to bare this stinking weight alone.

Liberation theology. How race is lived in America. Can you catch up?

Sitting outside room 2032 in the Valley Life Science Building on UC Berkeley's campus won't make me a poet anymore than swallowin' a frog will teach me to holler for rain. But I am small and hungry, excited to see her approaching.

Shufflin feet that sound like sandpaper music. Cropped hair, the color of watered-down black cherry Kool-Aid. An alternatively business-type manner, like catch up with me cause I'm on the move. Voice runnin like liquid lava toward one of those indigenous places in her poems, molten and lyrical, destroying the contaminated village, daring it to build again.

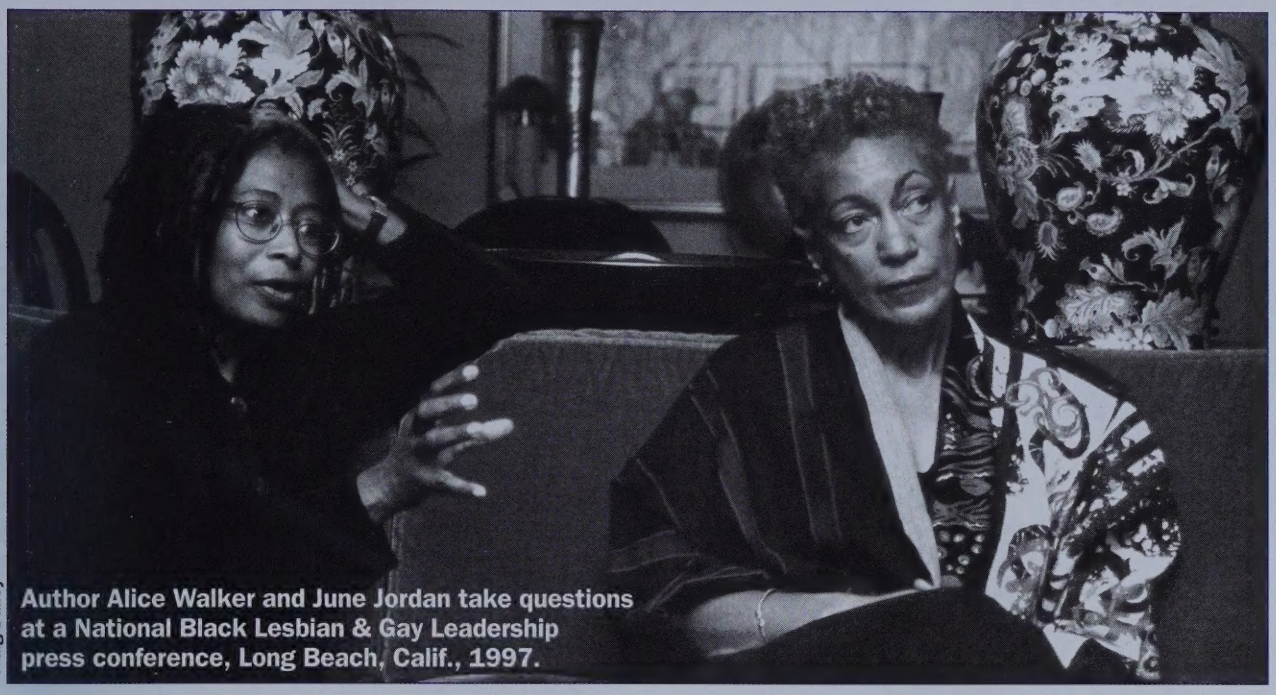
Before I am welcomed into the class, Jordan asks her students if they would mind me sitting in on their discussion. She treats the learning environment as a community of equal voices deciding democratically to welcome visitors. And I trust what I can see and what I can hear and what I can do on my block, and around the corner, and on the campus where I teach (from Affirmative Acts). I wait some more before a round woman with a vibrant smile cracks the door and motions me in.

Jordan's 12 o'clock poetry class is reading persona poems. They are relinquishing their own identities to write the poem of someone they will never be beyond the life that emerges from these lines. At some point you just have to trust/somebody else the soldier/wearing a white shirt the poet/wearing glasses the woman/wearing red shoes/into combat (from Living Room).

The class consists of about 20 students who personify the globe's diversity. One olive-toned young lady talks about Hinduism and her grandfather's singing of the Gita, which she recalls in recitation. Jordan becomes a student, listening, asking an occasional question, yielding the floor to this poet/teacher sharing her ancestry.

Hinduism. Service and sacrifice. Like a tortoise withdraws his limbs, so does the God-realized withdraw his senses. Stratified society. Chocolate cotton. Guatemala. Chocolate persona poem. Homeless man, the world's recyclist You bring out the sista in me. No adverbs. Poetry as an understanding of the world. Poems on dharma and karma due Tuesday. Comments and constructive criticism. Pass the poem back to its original owner.

By the end of class, I am understanding cultural pluralism, a term I came across in *Affirmative Acts*, a collection of political essays by Jordan. A democratic philosophy of cultural pluralism is what I just witnessed in her poetry class: A society in which numerous distinct ethnic and racial and religious groups rightfully and



Craig Bailey

Author Alice Walker and June Jordan take questions at a National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership press conference, Long Beach, Calif., 1997.

equally *co*-exist within one nation. The belief that no simple explanatory system or view of reality can account for all the phenomena of life (from *Affirmative Acts*).

She takes a seat an arm's length away from my nervous heartbeat. She asks me, "So, what do you want to know?" just like that. After thanking her for the work she does, I say, "I just want to know about your process, your theory of teaching and writing poetry, and how it all comes together."

The passion of her plight is as obvious as the light in her eyes. She describes the Poetry for the People program as a village of what I call Truth Poets, those folks who make sure change keeps changing—for the better. I was looking at the students: Asian- and African- and Hispanic- and Native American ... As I listened to their modest demands for safety and representation, I felt almost calm: They were working it out. They had to (from *Affirmative Acts*). I interpreted the objective of the class to introduce, cultivate, and nurture a creative resistance to an indelible capitalist machine. Poetry is the propelling avenue.

The class views itself and the world as a collective. As with their persona poems, they step into a situation before they consider changing it. They will ultimately take their knowledge of writing and applying poetry into the Berkeley Public School System, accepting responsibility for the co-existence of justice and creative expression within academic walls. Because she is teaching us to write while standing, the history of our now will read like a poem in which each word, each member, is significant.

It is no longer that white America asks what is to be done "to integrate" Black people into "mainstream" society but that white America has expanded its racist perspectives to discredit or preclude all non-European immigration, all social programs indispensable to anybody not born middle-class, and all non-European languages, histories, literatures (from *Affirmative Acts*).
Change is not absolute. Poetry for the People. Too many young people don't know their history. CHANGE IS NOT ABSOLUTE. Grabs my hand. Wish you the best. Always.

There is always a child "born with a veil over her face," my grandma would say. She grows up thinking too much, wanting more than a somehow-someway gospel hymn that never found its way out of the sanctuary of a disquieting solitude. Someone will recognize her as strange. Someone else knows she will do great things.

One day she will ask a question no one can answer, The Nazis? Does snow make feet bleed, Momma (from *Soldier*)? She will be talkin' crazy. She will easily learn the language of the white folks. She will add her own thang. She will watch the world carefully and wish to stir it up with her words.

She will learn that poverty and oppression are putrid smells. She will realize that poor folks get used to the stench. They start to believe the whole world smells sour. They become complacent with pollution. They welcome it like a visitor who ain't goin' nowhere.

And then she will emerge from this stinking place, educated and grown, her memory full of that foul smell. She will go home and around the globe and realize that she has never been alone. Her lungs will become full of rank truths. She will be politically incorrect because her voice will rumble incensed poems. Standing in the middle of everywhere reeking of home, she will knowingly proclaim:

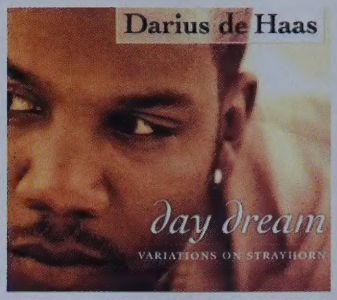
I want to be a poet. Or at least love like one. I want to join the universal struggle and make my wordteeth strong. I want to process the world and change it slowly. I want to kill this smell. I am going to kill this smell.

Rest easy, Warrior Woman.
You have earned your restin' place.

billy strayhorn

1915 - 1967

words by Michael K. Watts



"He was an unsung hero, a great figure in history who created a great treasure of music."

Composer, arranger, and pianist Billy Strayhorn was born on Nov. 29, 1915. The child prodigy was raised in the Homewood district of Pittsburgh where he worked odd jobs to buy a used upright piano while in grade school. Upon his matriculation at Westinghouse High School, Strayhorn began composing pieces and was first pianist for the Senior Orchestra. He even played Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto opus 16 at his high school graduation.

From there, Strayhorn enrolled in the Pittsburgh Musical Institute and began playing at local bars with a combo called the Mad Hatters. At age 19 he composed the music for a comedy musical, *Fantastic Rhythm*. It was during this time that he wrote a song entitled "Life is Lonely" which would become his most noted recording, renamed as "Lush Life." A visit backstage at Pittsburgh's Stanley Theatre where Duke Ellington was about to play his first show would prove to be a turning point in Strayhorn's career. The 23-year-old met Ellington and sang a song he had recently written entitled "Something to Live For." The rest is history.

Strayhorn moved to New York and went on to become Ellington's primary collaborator and arranger, penning songs like "Take the 'A' Train," "Lotus Blossom," "Chelsea Bridge" and "A Flower is a Lovesome Thing." These two musicians shared a unique chemistry, which allowed them to make countless recordings over the next 30 years. But the success Strayhorn achieved with Ellington had its drawbacks.

Working with Ellington forced him to remain in the shadows of the legendary jazz musician. Many of the compositions Strayhorn wrote for Ellington were credited as Strayhorn-Ellington compositions, and some were even credited as Ellington's alone.

Living an openly gay lifestyle did not make Strayhorn's life any easier. Nevertheless, the enigmatic composer lived his life somewhat like a quiet soldier. In a time when people were afraid to be who they truly were, Strayhorn was self-accepting and loved men without shame.

In the 1950s, Strayhorn completed solo albums, revues, and a host of collaborations. Strayhorn worked with the likes of Lena Horne, Pearl Bailey, Johnny Hodges, and Quincy Jones. In 1964, he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, a result of years of smoking and drinking. Strayhorn's last composition, *Blood Count*, was completed while in the hospital. He died in 1967. Later that year, Ellington recorded an album of Strayhorn's material entitled And His Mother Called Him Bill.

Today, Strayhorn's legacy lives on in the music of Ellington and in a host of tribute albums. The most recent such project is *Day Dream: Variations on Strayhorn* (PS Classics) by accomplished Broadway singer-actor Darius de Haas. "I want [Strayhorn] to be remembered as an extraordinary composer in his own right," de Haas said, "He was an unsung hero, a great figure in history who created a great treasure of music."

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